

THE ISLAND COLONY

Tasmania : society and politics 1880 - 1900

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

A. M. A.	Amalgamated Miners Association
C. N.	<u>Church News</u>
Cl.	<u>Clipper</u>
C.	<u>Colonist</u>
C. C.	<u>Cornwall Chronicle</u>
D. P.	<u>Daily Post</u>
D. T.	<u>Daily Telegraph</u>
Hist. Studies	Historical Studies of Australia and New Zealand
H. T. A.	<u>Hobart Town Advertiser</u>
H. T. C.	<u>Hobart Town Courier</u>
H. T. G.	<u>Hobart Town Gazette</u>
H. A. J.	House of Assembly Journals
I. F. L.	Imperial Federation League
I. T. U. C.	Intercolonial Trade Union Congress
J. & P. of P.	Journal and Papers of Parliament
L. E.	<u>Launceston Examiner</u>
L. C. J.	Legislative Council Journals
M. H. A.	Member of House of Assembly
M. L. C.	Member of Legislative Council
M.	<u>Mercury</u>
Mo.	<u>Monitor</u>
M. L. S.	<u>Mount Lyell Standard</u>
N. W. A.	<u>North Western Advocate</u>
S. of T.	Statistics of Tasmania
T. D.	<u>Tasmanian Democrat</u>
T. H. R. A.	Tasmanian Historical Research Association
T. N.	<u>Tasmanian News</u>
T. T.	<u>Tasmanian Times</u>
T.	<u>Tasmanian Tribune</u>
T. & L. C.	Trades and Labour Council
Z. & D. H.	<u>Zeehan and Dundas Herald</u>

SOCIETY.

For a generation after the granting of self government (1856), Tasmania remained "cast in a more aristocratic shape" ¹ than the other Australian Colonies. Mainland governments adopted manhood suffrage, triennial parliaments and radical land legislation during the late ~~fifties~~ and ~~early sixties~~. But in Tasmania the franchise was not significantly widened for almost thirty years and manhood suffrage was not accepted till the eve of Federation. Society did not exhibit the social mobility which English visitors found so marked in New South Wales and Victoria. It remained clearly stratified, and habits, values and ideas inherited from the penal settlement lingered long after the cessation of transportation.

In New South Wales, shadows cast by the convict system were rapidly dispersed after 1840. They mottled Tasmania's social landscape till late in the century. During the last few years of transportation, the convict-emancipist group represented just under 40 per cent of the total population of both colonies.²

1. Dilke, C. W., Greater Britain, (London 1869); p.361.

2. Clark, C. M. H., Select Documents in Australian History, 1788-1850 (Syd.1950); pp. 406-8.

But the influx of free immigrants into New South Wales in the forties and fifties swiftly reduced the percentage. Between 1837 and 1852 the population of the elder colony rose by about 140 per cent.³ The old social divisions were overlaid. The Tasmanian population increased by only 22 per cent between 1848 and 1863.⁴

Population movements during the gold rushes increased the proportion of convicts and emancipists in Tasmania. Sixty thousand people left the colony. Three-quarters of them were free settlers,⁵ coming from what Governor Sir William Denison called the 'labouring' and 'middling' classes.⁶ The wealthy landed, commercial and professional groups and the poor emancipists were least affected and were left facing one another across a wide stretch of social territory sparsely populated by small farmers, artisans, shop-keepers and other lower middle class groups. Many gold seekers returned. The statistics do not indicate their social origins, but the majority were probably free settlers. Moreover the proportion of emancipists remained high after 1856, probably amounting to over one-quarter of the total, and over one-half of the adult population.

3. Clark, C. M. H., Select Documents in Australian History; 1851-1901 (Syd. 1955); p. 664.

4. Ibid.

5. Statistical Summary of Tasmania, 1816-1901; Appendix to S. of T. 1901; (Hobt. 1901).

6. Denison to Grey; 16 Jan. 1852.

Economic depression, a low birth rate, lack of immigration and continued emigration, all ensured the percentage was but slowly reduced.

Depression retarded the growth of population. During the late fifties there was an annual increase of 4 per cent. The rate slackened to 1.5 per cent in the following decade. Emigration exceeded immigration by 4,500 between 1856 and 1875.⁷ The whole structure of society was affected. In 1861 there were more men than women in the age groups above thirty. By 1870 women predominated in all groups between twenty and fifty.⁸ The birth rate declined from 39 per 1,000 in 1856 to 30 per 1,000 in 1870.⁹ The high concentration of convicts had made the colony unattractive to the migrant in the thirties and forties. Depression had a similar affect in the fifties, sixties and seventies. Tasmania was by-passed by that fertilizing stream of English working class immigration which vivified mainland popular movements. Emigration robbed the colony of many of its most active and intelligent natives. The lure of the larger colonies proved irresistible even during periods of prosperity. In the depressed sixties native youths crossed in droves to the mainland where work.

7. Statistical Summary of Tasmania, op.cit.

8. Townsley, W. A., "Tasmania and the Great Economic Depression 1856-1872",
T. H. R. A. Papers and Proceedings; IV, 2, July 1955; p.35.

9. Ibid p.36.

was plentiful and wages and conditions superior. Dissatisfaction was deprived of ideas, initiative, and leadership.

The predominantly emancipist working class clearly bore the marks of its origin. Although transportation had ceased there was a "residuum of crime, disease and poverty".¹⁰ Many of the more active and intelligent emancipists probably left the colony on regaining their freedom, leaving behind the unskilled, the dissolute, the sick and broken-spirited. This is borne out by the low standard of workmanship and lack of initiative exhibited by the work force, which Governor T. Gore-Browne claimed was "very different from that which is to be found in a colony that has always been free".¹¹ Tasmania provided no vast hinterland where emancipists could move and leave their past behind. Depression prevented them from achieving financial independence. The great majority remained poor wage earners.

The free settlers retained ideas and values gained from their experience in the penal settlement. Many had settled during and even before George Arthur's term of office (1824-36). Some had helped administer the colony and its prison population. Others, as magistrates, had meted out the system's justice. Most had enforced the discipline incumbent on masters of assigned servants. With the end of transportation and the granting of self government many conservative settlers had difficulty in

10. LE, 10 Oct. 1857.

11. Quoted by Coghlan, T.A. . . Labour and Industry in Australia, (1918) pp. 77.

in adapting themselves to new social and political conditions. They strove to perpetuate rather than outgrow the habits of the past.

The assignment system had turned the island into a prison farm and the free settlers into overseers of the convict working class. Its success had depended on keeping a wide and permanent division between bond and free. Governor Arthur punctiliously enforced the regulations of the system. Any reported relaxation of discipline in a settler's household brought a rebuke from the authorities. If the breach was serious Arthur revoked the assignment; a severe penalty in a colony where labour was scarce. The government's power over convicts was infinitely greater. Any action betraying what Arthur called "the insurgent spirit", merited punishment.¹² By promises of freedom, small indulgences, or harsh physical punishment, the authorities attempted to produce submissive and law abiding subjects.

Based on a rigid division between the free settlers and the convict labour force, the penal settlement fostered the growth of a caste mentality. Captain Alexander Cheyne, who was the Director General of Roads during the ~~thirties~~, said in evidence to the 1837 Select Committee on Transportation, that:

12. McKay, A., 'The Assignment System', p.119.

a contempt for convicts is frequently produced by personal experience of their ingratitude, duplicity, and general depravity; but it is also produced, in part, by the important position into which the great disparity between the classes raises the free ... and hence ... a prejudice of caste is produced, which sets the two classes of the community in hostility to each other. 13.

The clear lines of social division were but slowly smudged after 1856. Change came quicker in the towns, but the class structure remained rigid in many rural areas until the turn of the century. Free immigrants had tended to remain in the urban districts. Convicts supplied the bulk of the rural labour force before 1853. After cessation agricultural workers were usually employed on long contracts, receiving board and provisions from the employers. As late as 1878 Edward Braddon observed the suspicion which the emancipists roused among free settlers. "They were convicts once," he wrote, "and must remain under suspicion to the end of their days". "Young Tasmania", he claimed, "cannot forgive those of the former generations who bear the convict brand; cannot believe that they may have reformed; cannot believe any sort of good of them ... and delights always to think and speak ill of them".¹⁴

13. Quoted by Clark, C.M.H., in Select Documents in Australian History 1788-1850; p.166.

14. Braddon, E.N.C., "A Home in the Colonies" XXVII, in The Statesman and Friend of India, Oct. 1878.

The Masters and Servants Act,¹⁵ passed by the old Legislative Council during the last few days of its existence, provides cogent illustration of social divisions and attitudes. A servant, who broke his contract, refused to work diligently and carefully, or was guilty in his master's eyes of "any other misconduct", could be arrested without a warrant, taken into custody, and held for a week before his trial, and was prevented from speaking in his own defence. If guilty he was liable to a £10 fine, the loss of wages accruing to him, or to both punishments. A servant convicted of drunkenness, or of using obscene language, could be fined £20 or imprisoned for three months with hard labour. Attorney General Sir Francis Smith attempted to moderate the Act in 1857. Introducing the Bill, he said that all legislation should be adapted "to the new state of things now growing up, and they must remember that they had not now a population requiring to be controlled by the apparatus of gaols".¹⁶ Petitions from twelve rural districts objected to the proposed reform. They predicted that with the collapse of "wholesome restraint", servants would become dissatisfied, insubordinate and "utterly careless of their own or their masters' interests."¹⁷ The Fingal petitioners believed the new Bill would "infallibly disorganize" society.¹⁸ The Bill lapsed in Committee. Equally

15. 19 Vic., No. 28.

16. H. T. C., 25 Nov. 1857.

17. H. A. J., II, 1857, paper 71.

18. Ibid. paper 68.

futile attempts were made at reform in 1858 and 1859. The law was unchanged until the eighties.

The free settlers' uneasy suspicion of the emancipated convicts is illustrated by their attitude to the administration of justice. In 1860 T. G. Gregson tried to replace the Stipendary Magistrates by honorary Justices of the Peace. The magistrates, "Arthur's watch-dogs", had been key figures in the assignment system. Gregson was aiming a direct blow at scaffolding remaining from the penal establishment. He wanted to see "gaols and watchhouses done away with". "There was", he claimed, "too much of the penal settlement still kept up ...". F. M. Innes echoed conservative fears when he said "...crime would be rampant... if they relied on the honorary magistrates". Gregson's motions were defeated by a large majority.¹⁹

Monopolies in land and commerce accentuated the oligarchic character of Tasmanian society. A small group of men had dominated the economy from the early years of settlement.²⁰ Arthur's land policies had a profound affect on the system of land tenure. By 1832 nearly 2,000,000 acres had been given away in free grants.²¹ In 1850 over 4,000,000 acres were held as freehold or leased by individuals.²² The only large areas of

19. H. T. A., 2 Aug. 1860.

20. Hartwell, R.M., The Economic Development of Van Diemen's Land 1820-1850; (Melb.1954), p. 19.

21. Ibid, p. 58.

22. Ibid, p. 32.

unalienated fertile land remaining were in regions of heavy rainfall where dense forests confronted the prospective settler. Much of the best land was held in a few hands. Hartwell has estimated that the average size of holdings was 3,000 acres in 1848.²³ As late as 1881 the Van Diemen's Land Company and fourteen families owned one-quarter of all alienated land.²⁴ The colony's trade and finance was controlled by a small group of wealthy capitalists who had close social and commercial connexions with the large pastoralists.²⁵ Many urban businessmen owned properties. Many pastoralists invested in trading houses.²⁶ In 1863, the editor of the Cornwall Chronicle, described how the "merchants and dealers" who were "dependent upon and connected with "the pastoralists, had "for the most part become large landed and sheep proprietors".²⁷

23. Ibid.

24. Assessment Rolls in H. T. G., 1881, (Hobart 1881).

25. Hartwell, R. M., op. cit; p. 164.

26. Ibid.

27. 4 July 1863.

· ECONOMY.

Soon after self government depression settled over the colony. It lingered for nearly twenty years and exerted a profound affect on every aspect of society. Early in 1856 the future had appeared propitious. The preceding years had witnessed unparalleled prosperity as Tasmania shared in the spectacular developments across the Strait. The burgeoning mining settlements provided an insatiable market for primary produce, and profits, prices, and wages spiralled. The value of imports leaped from £600,000 to £1,750,000 between 1850 and 1853. The amount of coin held by local banks rose from £178,000 in 1850 to £995,000 in 1855. Government expenditure nearly doubled between 1852 and 1856.²⁸ But these years of optimism only deepened the ensuing gloom.

The exodus to the gold fields had serious economic repercussions. The colony lost, at least temporarily, a large portion of the male population, which fell from 21,000 in March 1851 to 13,000 at the end of 1853.²⁹ Some districts were almost bereft of men. Denison believed that at least four-fifths of the emigrants were "adult men accustomed to labour".³⁰

28. Statistical Summary of Tasmania, 1816-1901, op.cit.

29. S. of T., 1854.

30. Denison to Grey, 5 May 1852.

Many did not return and the overall efficiency of the work force declined. Both public and private spending was geared up to the artificial conditions of the boom years. The sudden return to a more natural level in the mid fifties caused many dislocations.

The Gold Rushes hastened the end of transportation. But even this apparent blessing added to the colony's economic troubles. Tasmanian prosperity had been founded on cheap convict labour, Imperial expenditure, and the reliable local market provided by the convict establishment. The economy tottered when these props were suddenly withdrawn. Imperial expenditure fell from £280,000 to £70,000 between 1854 and 1864.³¹ Agriculture, which had depended on cheap labour and a steady local market, was artificially stimulated by the Gold Rushes and the harsh realities of the new environment did not become apparent till late in the fifties. By then South Australia and Victoria were edging Tasmania out of her traditional mainland markets. The colony was in the unenviable position of a predominantly rural community which had lost both manpower and markets.

While agriculture languished, industry remained embryonic. Until minerals were discovered in the seventies and eighties, there were no natural resources which could

31. Statistical Summary of Tasmania, op.cit.

stimulate industrial development. The whaling industry, after reaching a peak in the late thirties, went into a steady decline and never recovered its former position. The ancillary ship-building industry suffered similarly. The number of 'trades and manufactories' remained stationary in the fifties and sixties. Fewer flour mills were operating in 1867 than a decade previously.³² In 1861 a Mercury editorial claimed that "...every industry but the pastoral interest is in a depressed and ruinous condition".³³

The wool-growing industry had been stabilized before the depression, and the overseas demand remained fairly constant during the fifties, sixties and seventies. Apart from minor fluctuations there was a slow but steady development. Wool exports were worth about £1,400,000 in the first five years of the 1850-70 period. They rose to £1,900,000 in the second and remained constant at £1,800,000 during the last two. Wool continued to be the largest export earner and virtual backbone of the economy till the development of mining late in the century. In 1850 it earned about 40 per cent of the value of all exports. It accounted for 42 per cent of exports in 1864 and 48 per cent in 1867 as the stricken colony leant more heavily on its basic industry.³⁴

32. Statistical Summary of Tasmania 1816-1901, op.cit.

33. 6 June 1861.

34. Statistical Summary of Tasmania 1816-1901, op.cit.

Depression blighted the whole economy.³⁵ Government expenditure fell from £400,000 in 1856 to £225,000 in 1867. Between 1856 and 1870 imports were halved, falling from £1,400,000 to £800,000; exports declined in value from £1,200,000 to £648,000. Shipping trading with Tasmanian ports declined by one-third between 1856 and 1870, from 314,000 to 213,000 tons. Tasmanian banks held £500,000 in coin in 1856. Ten years later they held only £165,000.³⁵ Wages of labourers and artisans fell by 35 per cent between 1857 and 1870, while prices of necessities declined by only 25 per cent.³⁶ The picture drawn by the statistics, "... is of a colony over which hangs a seemingly perpetual depression, where standards of living are falling and where pauperism and even destitution is not uncommon".³⁷

Intellectual, social and political life were as stagnant as the economy. The colony well merited the name 'Sleepy Hollow' bestowed on it by patronizing mainlanders. The lethargy and lack of initiative was noted by even the most superficial visitors. J. Martineau, an English journalist and one of the more perceptive tourists, has left a graphic picture of Hobart during the depression:

35. Statistical Summary of Tasmania, 1816-1901, op.cit.

36. Townsley, W.A., "Tasmania and the Great Economic Depression 1856-1872" op.cit., p. 37.

37. Ibid, p.38.

The streets are almost empty. Nobody looks busy. Nobody is in a hurry. Converse with anyone about the state of the Colony, and the word depression is one of the first you hear, and it will come over again and again until you are weary of it. Different people mean different things by it, and feel the tendency from prosperity to adversity in different ways, but none dispute the fact. Elderly ladies lament the old days when there was more society, and a more abundant supply of soldier or sailor ball partners; merchants and tradesmen the time when Hobart Town promised to be the emporium if not the metropolis of Australia. It is seldom indeed that anyone can be heard to speak cheerily of the present or hopefully of the future. 38.

The icy blast of depression congealed Tasmanian society, preserving many habits, ideas and institutions, which would have slowly decayed in a warmer economic climate. No new economic interest arose to challenge the position of the groups prominent since the twenties. Poverty thwarted the parvenu and severely restricted social mobility. There could be no sudden transition from penal settlement to fluid, democratic society. Tasmania moved slowly along in the wake of the other colonies, but for a long time the movement was scarcely perceptible and the eddies and cross currents were rarely visible on the still surface of society.

38. Martineau, J., Letters from Australia, (London 1868), p.62.

POLITICS.

In the mainland colonies, the men who "wanted to transfer power from Downing Street to themselves succeeded in transferring it to their inferiors", ³⁹ during the first years of self government. This group retained political power for twenty years in Tasmania. Even before 1856 a conservative reaction had set in among the wealthy landowners and merchants who spearheaded the anti-transportation crusade. Fears were fertilized by the large number of convicts who swamped the colony in the late forties and early fifties, and the social and political disturbances engendered by gold. In 1850 T. G. Gregson, leading 'radical' and framer of the Constitution, told G. T. Boyes, the Colonial Auditor, that "... if sworn to an opinion upon the subject he would assert his belief that the colony was not now in a state to receive Free Institutions. The convict population have now too great an influence ..."⁴⁰

39. Merivale, H., Lectures on Colonization and Colonies, quoted by Gollan, R. in Radical and Working Class Politics. (Melb. 1960), p.1.

40. Diary of G. T. Boyes, 8 July 1850.

During a debate in the old Council on the Electoral Bill for the first Parliament, an attempt was made to reduce the voting power of Hobart, where radical forces were strongest. Denouncing the move, prominent merchant T. D. Chapman said it was "with deep regret he now found that those who were most forward in demanding free institutions were turning their backs on the people" ⁴¹ He charged his fellow members with deserting the principles they had so often enunciated in petitions to the British Parliament. Chapman called a public meeting in Hobart and presented a large petition to the Council. Members, who had dabbled in rabble rousing during the Anti-Transportation movement, berated Chapman's action. Gregson, an inveterate demagogue in the past, said he hoped he would never again hear of meetings being called in Hobart. Anyone who did, he asserted, was "an enemy to the colony".⁴² Men who had roused a popular movement to end Transportation found in that movement a latent challenge to their own privileged position.

In New South Wales and Victoria, the social changes wrought by gold strengthened the democratic forces and broke the political power of the squatters. The events of the Gold Rush period in Tasmania allowed the conservatives to stabilize

41. B. I. C., 17 Jan. 1856.

42. Ibid.

their position and assured their continued dominance after 1856. The exodus of working and lower-middle-class men from the colony broke the working-class organizations which had grown up in the thirties and forties, and decimated the popular movement which had developed during the anti-transportation agitation. The conservatives were able to draft the constitution and prepare for their retention of power unhampered by a vigilant popular movement. Successes of the radical cause on the mainland frightened them further into intransigence. But their victory was hollow. Economic and social changes which acted so clearly in their favour also produced a depression which dogged every government for twenty years.

The difficulty of establishing responsible government in the absence of organized parties led to instability in parliament and confusion in the electorate. During the first ten years of self government the average life of ministries was only fifteen months. There were three governments in the first six months. Groups which led the fight for self government broke up into rival factions when their objective was achieved. After 1856 politics were characterized by petty squabbling and factionalism. The feuding was waged with a virulence that shocked many genteel electors. A petition of 1861 humbly requested the Queen to "save the country from further degradation and final ruin",

and described how "the scenes in the House during the last five years have been a disgrace to the civilization of the age, the language used, coarse, provoking, intemperate - calculated to precipitate the colony into a state of anarchy".⁴³

This was an extreme reaction; the electorate as a whole was apathetic. Only about 40 per cent of electors voted in the first election and the percentage did not rise significantly. Eight seats were uncontested in the first two elections and fifteen members were returned unopposed in 1862.⁴⁴ Electorates were lilliputian. The average number of voters was 340; but George Town had only 108, Glamorgan 128 and Ringwood 151. Before 1870 only 42 per cent of adult males were enfranchised.⁴⁵ But the percentage varied widely from electorate to electorate. The average for country districts was about 40 per cent.⁴⁶ Rural labourers were normally voteless. The political control of wealthy landowners was manifest in most areas and country electorates outnumbered the towns by two to one. Urban districts had a high percentage of voters - 80 per cent in Hobart and 70 per cent in Launceston. The towns were under-represented, but even with electoral equality they would have

43. LE, 22 Oct. 1861.

44. S. of T., 1856-70.

45. Robson, L.L., Press and Politics, p.301.

46. M, 1 July 1884.

been outvoted. They lost heavily during the Gold Rush and stagnated throughout the depression. Hobart and Launceston held only 31 per cent of the total population in 1857.⁴⁷

By 1870 Hobart had increased by only 834 and Launceston by 2,500. Together they accounted for just under 30 per cent of the colony's 100,000.⁴⁸ The small town-based liberal movement was swamped by rural conservatism.

Government was carried on by "a coalition of conservative landholders and merchants, with changes in the nature of the Administration determined by private family feuds and arrangements".⁴⁹ Ten pastoralists and five merchants sat in the first parliament and the situation was unchanged till the concluding years of the century.⁵⁰ While depression continued the pastoralist-merchant group dominated the economy. Small farmers, artisans, labourers and retailers were hard hit by the recession and their diversity of interest prevented them from presenting a united front to the established oligarchy. In 1863 the editor of the Cornwall Chronicle wrote

47. S. of T., 1857.

48. Ibid, 1870.

49. Robson, L.L., op.cit., p.59.

50. Ibid, p. 19.

that "the wool kings are all powerful in Parliament. Numerically, they only constitute a small section in both houses - but morally and materially they influence directly or indirectly a majority in both branches of the Legislature".⁵¹

Legislation of the period up to 1880 clearly manifested the conservatism which pervaded the colony. The normally hostile factions were united in their resistance to progressive reform. The few radicals in the Assembly were impotent. Conservative success was due in part to the lack of opposition. There was some popular dissatisfaction in the two cities, but the mass of emancipated workers proved remarkably docile. Lacking initiative and purpose, they rarely challenged the conservative assumptions of the wealthy. It is hard to discern any strong manifestation of irreverence, resourcefulness, and egalitarian solidarity; the qualities which Dr. Russel Ward has suggested were highly developed among emancipists. There was neither strong working class organizations nor articulate liberal movement until the eighties when the emancipist ranks were rapidly thinning. The high concentration of convicts hindered, rather than encouraged, the development of Tasmanian democracy.

51. 11 July 1863.

Tasmanian conservatism is hard to define with any precision. The exigencies of colonial life and general lack of intellectual sophistication precluded clear articulation and systematization. It did not incorporate a Burkean reverence for the past or a pessimistic view of human endeavour, but consisted of a hard core of rationalizations justifying the power and privileges of property, surrounded and protected by a cluster of emotional fears. Conservatives wanted to preserve the social barriers of a hierarchical society. F. M. Innes was inspired "with an ardent solicitude ... that this land may be one of settled government, in which the natural subordinations of society are maintained".⁵² To the conservatives, preservation of the political power of wealth and property, was crucial. Government, they believed, should be controlled by a wealthy oligarchy who would legislate for the good of the whole colony. But conservatives assumed a community of interest between rich and poor and frequently confused the interests of their own class with the good of society.

The body politic, it was generally considered, should be protected from the passions of the masses. To many, full scale democracy was little better than anarchy. Only those with a 'stake in the country' could be entrusted with political power.

52. LE, 18 Novr. 1862.

The Launceston Examiner warned that "mere numbers should not have a preponderating power"⁵³ in the electorate. Restricted franchise, plural voting and a powerful Upper House were necessary to preserve the balance between the people and the property interest. Conservative electors of Morven believed that only a restricted franchise could save Tasmania from the fate of New South Wales and Victoria, where "... democracy in all its unblushing audacity (was) riding rough shod over the best, nay vital interests of those communities, as too sadly indicated by its inevitable results, the systematic exclusion from their legislatures of men of education, intelligence and established character ... (and) the admission thereto of illiterate, needy and unprincipled adventurers".⁵⁴ Many had a genuine fear of democracy and the "levelling tendency of the masses". The most obtuse conservative was aware that the democratic movement aimed directly at political privilege. The after affects of the convict system increased apprehensions. Fears and suspicions endemic to penal colonies lurked in the conservative mind long after transportation ceased.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid, 21 May 1861.

After 1856 some conservative politicians thought the colony had already advanced too far towards democratic government. Political instability and economic depression fanned discontent. Martineau observed that in conversation "members not only of the Legislature but of the Ministry, do not hesitate to avow their conviction that the granting of the new constitution has proved to be a mistake and a misfortune to the country".⁵⁵ In 1861, a petition to the Queen from members of parliament, magistrates, landowners, tradesmen, merchants and mechanics of Launceston asked for a return to the old partly nominated Council.⁵⁶ During the early sixties the Launceston Examiner advocated conservative reform of the constitution.

F. M. Innes, who was one of the colony's leading politicians, being minister in five governments between 1857 and 1877 and premier in the early seventies, made no secret of his ambition to alter the constitution. He advocated his ideas in private letters, on the floor of the House, and in policy speeches to his electorate. He had, he said, always been opposed to the constitution, and his antipathy had increased over the years. The colony, he thought, "was

55. Martineau, J., op.cit., p. 77.

56. LE., 20 Oct. 1861.

already in a dangerous state and ... did not possess those guarantees for the property interest which it was most desirable to have, and he believed the franchise was a thorough mistake".⁵⁷

The Chapman Ministry (1861-3), which included Innes, toyed with the idea of introducing conservative reforms. The Governor's speech at the opening of the sixty one sessions promised such measures, but they were never implemented.⁵⁸ The majority of politicians were resigned to the constitution. An editorial in the Mercury in 1861, which epitomized this attitude, declared that it was:

an insuperable truth that we are committed irrevocably to the form of government and the nature of the institutions under which our affairs are henceforth and forever to be administered. We may seek to strengthen the guarantees of conservatism, but we can never hope to do so by imposing any restrictions upon popular liberties, by withdrawing any franchise that has been conceded. Our retreat is cut off - we must make our institutions a success. 59.

Conservatives controlled the destinies of the colony for twenty years after 1856 but could find no answer to the inexorable downward trend of the economy. They yearned for prosperity and dispatched parties on fruitless searches for

57. M., 30 Aug. 1861.

58. Robson, L. L., op.cit., p. 149.

59. 24 June 1861.

gold, without realizing that depression was the condition of their success. "Happy if they had known their blessings", wrote Rusden, "the islanders pined for swollen statistical tables".⁶⁰ The free settlers who survived till the eighties saw the return of prosperity only to watch it undermine the social and political edifice they had struggled so long to preserve.

60. Rusden, G. W., History of Australia, (Melb. 1897); p.442.

WATERSHED - 1871-81.

In 1870-1 the depths of depression were plumbed. For twenty years politicians, civil servants and commercial leaders had endeavoured to pilot the colony out of distress, but they had faced difficulties beyond their control and their efforts were futile. During 1871, James 'Philosopher' Smith was prospecting alone in the trackless rain forests forty miles from Emu Bay. On December 4th. he pushed slowly through dense horizontal scrub at the base of Mt Bischoff and discovered the richest tin mine in the world. He carried specimens back to the coast at Table Cape, smelted a portion and obtained the first tin produced in Tasmania. The colony had entered a new era. By 1881 it was recovering from the long immersion in the icy waters of depression. With the thaw hope and optimism bloomed and streams of change traversed the social terrain.

In 1873 the Mt Bischoff Tin Mining Company was floated with a capital of £60,000 in £5 shares and development of the mine began. Access was difficult. Heavily laden bullock drays floundered along an unmade track running through dense forests to Burnie. The track was under mud for nine months of the year. At times during winter it was impassable.¹ But in 1878 the

1. Fenton, James. A History of Tasmania, (Launceston 1884) p.390

Van Diemen's Land Company built a tramway to the mine and ore began to flow into new smelters at Launceston. By 1881, Waratah, at the foot of Mt Bischoff, had a population of 900 and was already a well established community with churches, public schools, five hotels, a hospital and Mechanics Institute.² The Company had paid dividends amounting to £210,000 and shares changed hands at prices ranging from £52 to £55.³

Philosopher Smith's strike rejuvenated the flagging mining industry. Prospectors wandering the length and breadth of the island opened an age of mineral discovery. Renison Bell, after visiting Bischoff, prospected in the North-East and discovered alluvial tin in the upper reaches of the George and Ringarooma rivers. Tin was also found at Mt Heemskirk thirty miles south of Waratah. Gold was discovered on the Pieman River in the West and at Lisle in the North-East. In 1878 the Dalley brothers struck rich reef gold at Beaconsfield on the West Tamar. Three years later the district had a population of 1500. Six hundred men were employed at sixteen mines and the town supported four hotels, three churches, and five schools.⁴ By March 1884 the Tasmania mine had

2. Walch's Red Book, 1881.

3. Coghlan, T.A., op cit., IV, p. 1825.

4. Walch's Red Book, 1881.

produced gold worth £460,000 and £279,000 had been paid in 66 dividends.⁵

Mining developed rapidly in the second half of the seventies. Only 15 men were employed in the industry in 1869.⁶ By 1881 there were 6,500 people on the various fields.⁷ Two and a half thousand were supported by 184 mines and claims scattered throughout the North-East,⁸ the rest at Beaconsfield, Waratah and Lefroy.⁹ In 1876, 1600 tons of tin and 10,000 ozs of gold, valued at £130,000 were exported.¹⁰ Five years later 4,000 tons of tin and 54,000 ozs of gold, worth £500,000 left the colony.¹¹ The number of tin leases rose from 16 to 241 between 1874 and 1881.¹² There were 16 mining companies registered in 1876. In 1881, 121 companies with capital of well over £1,000,000 were registered.¹³ Mining had a profound affect on the moribund economy, It provided employment and expanded local markets,

5. Fenton, J., op.cit., p. 97.

6. Blainey, G., 'Population Movements in Tasmania 1870-1901' in T.H.R.A. Papers and Proceedings, III no. 4, June 1954, p.63-4

7. S. of T., 1881.

8. Johnston, R.M., Tasmanian Official Handbook, (Hobt.1891) p.93

9. S. of T., 1881.

10. Statistical Summary of Tasmania, op.cit.

11. Ibid.

12. S. of T., 1884.

13. Walch's Red Book, 1876 & 1881.

attracted capital and immigrants, created private wealth and public revenue, diversified the economy and pumped confidence through every artery of commercial life.

The mining districts were more egalitarian than the older settlements. The social attitudes embodied in the old Masters and Servants Act never took root. A Zeehan miner wrote that when he arrived on the field he "...was much pleased with the prospects, but a great deal more pleased to see that Jack Brown was as good as Lord Muck",¹⁴ The mines attracted mainlanders who had scant regard for customs hallowed by local usage. In 1881, 15.1 per cent of Beaconsfield's population were Victorians and there were 300 to 400 at Waratah.¹⁵ Wages and conditions were generally superior on the mine-fields. A pioneer of the North-Eastern mines described how the eight shilling, eight-hour day was "a dream then in the minds of Tasmanians, but it came to pass on the tin fields".¹⁶ Many native youths who went mining shed inherited values and learnt an independence they never forgot.

14. Z. & D. H., 30 Nov. 1893.

15. Blainey, G., 'Population Movements in Tasmania', op.cit., p.

16. Ireland, M., Pioneering on the North East Coast and West Coast of Tasmania, 1876 - 1915, (Laun.1914), p.71.

The effects of the mineral-engendered prosperity were widely ramified. The revenue for 1881 was the largest for any year in the history of the Colony. It had increased by 85 per cent since 1871, from £2.8 to £4 per head of population. Expenditure had increased by 61 per cent, from £2.7 to £4.4 per head. The value of trade was greater than any year since 1855, rising from £1,500,000 to nearly £3,000,000 during the seventies. Bank assets jumped from £740,000 to over £2,500,000. The amount of coin held by banks increased from £73,000 to £516,000. The standard of living of all classes rose. Nine and a half thousand depositors had £269,000 in savings accounts in 1871. By 1881, 14,500 depositors had accounts worth £369,000.¹⁷ Labourers' and artisans' wages rose, on the average, by about ten shillings a week between 1871 and 1881. Domestic and agricultural labourers were better off, but increases were less substantial.¹⁸ Prices did not rise correspondingly. Bread, flour, sugar, potatoes, milk, beef, and butter were no dearer in 1881 than they had been a decade previously.¹⁹

17. Statistical Summary of Tasmania., op.cit.

18. Johnston, R. M., Tasmanian Official Handbook, 1892, op.cit., p.300

19. S. of T., 1871 and 1881.

Apart from minor fluctuations, the colony remained prosperous till the end of the eighties. The mining industry continued to expand. Exports of tin and gold declined, but prospectors working down the West Coast from Waratah began to unearth the riches of the rain-drenched mountain ranges. The Zeehan and Dundas silver fields were discovered in 1882 and were producing by the end of the decade. By 1891 they supported a population of 2,500.²⁰ Gold was found at Mt Lyell in 1883 although the vast copper deposits were not tapped till the nineties. The value of trade rose slightly while public and private wealth increased considerably. The estimated value of property rose from £714,000 to £956,000.²¹ Government revenue increased from £500,000 to £760,000, and expenditure from £463,000 to £722,000. The number of savings accounts jumped from 15,000 to 25,000 and their value from £369,000 to £521,000. Bank assets increased from £2,700,000 to £4,700,000.²²

The genial economic climate encouraged government spending and the colony entered confidently into the London

20. Census of Tasmania 1891, (Hobt. 1891).

21. Johnston, R. M., Tasmanian Official Handbook 1892, op.cit., p.310.

22. 'Statistical Summary of Tasmania', op.cit.

loan market. In April 1881 a loan of £300,000 was raised at an average of £99.11.9, the highest price paid up to then for an Australian 4 per cent loan in England.²³ Between 1883 and 1886 a further three loans raised £2,300,000. An extensive scheme of public works was implemented. In 1871 there were few roads and no railways. By 1889 £3,250,000 had been spent on public works and 5,500 miles of road and 374 miles of railway had been constructed.²⁴

The area under cultivation increased by 10 per cent during the seventies. Improved transport facilities, new settlement and expanding markets stepped up exports of potatoes, fruit and jam, which rose in value from £89,000 to £194,000 between 1871 and 1881. The number of cattle increased by one-third. The elimination of scab, due largely to the Scab Act of 1870, and an increased use of artificial grasses, gave a fillip to the pastoral industry. The number of sheep rose from 1,400,000 to 1,800,000 during the seventies and value of wool exports from £300,000 to £500,000.²⁵ But the industry had reached a peak and the number of sheep did not rise significantly for forty years. The dry midlands

23. Coghlan, T., op. cit. IV, p.1824.

24. Statistical Summary of Tasmania , op. cit.

25. 'Statistical Summary of Tasmania , op. cit.

were ideal for wool growing; with these fully exploited the industry stood still. Climate precluded expansion. The thirty-inch isohyet was an invisible barrier marking the limit of profitable sheep farming.

The grain industry languished and the area under wheat shrank from 39,000 to 30,000 acres between 1876-7 and 1885-6.²⁶ Tasmanian farming lacked enterprise and methods were primitive in many districts. Artificial fertilizers were almost unknown and rotation of crops was rarely practised.²⁷ Soil exhaustion lowered yields. The average yield of wheat, per acre, fell from 26.4 bushels in 1866 to 17.3 bushels in 1885.²⁸ Mainland markets were closed to Tasmanian grain and prices slumped. Between 1874 and 1881 the average price of wheat fell from 5s.6d. to 4s.7d. per bushel, barley fell from 4s. to 3s.6d. and coats from 2s. 9d. to 2s.3d. However the outlook in 1881 was brighter than it had been for many years and collectors of statistics in many districts reported a general improvement in equipment and techniques.

26. S. of T., 1885.

27. 'Reports of Collectors of Agricultural Statistics', published as appendices to S. of T. between 1870 and 1881.

28. S. of T., 1885.

While the grain industry stagnated the rural areas settled before 1856 declined in importance. The best land was occupied early and little new land was broken up after the fifties. During the seventies the area under crop declined in the South-East, Midlands and Northern Plains.³⁰ In some districts the decline was compensated for by increased acreage of artificial grasses. But in nine districts³¹ the total cultivated area fell. The collector of statistics at Green Ponds reported in 1874. that hundreds of acres of cultivated land were being overrun by the bush.³² Many old districts could not support their natural increase. Young men and families moved into the new farmlands and mining districts. The five electoral districts³³ in the South-East lost over 1,000 inhabitants between 1871 and 1881.³⁴ Their total increase between 1857 and 1891 amounted to only 921.³⁵ The seven electorates in the Midlands and North³⁶ increased by 2,500 during the sixties, but they stagnated in the seventies and lost over 1,000 people.³⁷ Morven and

30. Ibid, 1871 and 1881.

31. Ibid.

32. S. of T., 1874.

33. Brighton, Clarence, Richmond, Sorell, Glamorgan.

34. S. of T., 1871 and 1881.

35. Ibid, 1857 and 1891.

36. Campbell Town, Oatlands, Cumberland, Morven, Norfolk Plains, Ringwood, Westbury.

37. S. of T., 1861, 71, 81.

Norfolk Plains had smaller populations in 1881 than twenty years earlier. Most country towns were stationary, while Longford, Westbury, Campbell Town, Evandale, Hamilton, Pontville and Carrick all lost population in the eighties. Longford fell from 4th to 12th among Tasmanian towns, Westbury from 5th to 11th and Campbell Town from 7th to 17th.³⁸

The birth rate of the Midlands and South East was the lowest in the colony and was either stationary or declining.³⁹

There was a serious labour shortage in the old rural areas during the seventies and eighties. The agricultural report from Green Ponds in 1874 said the labour force of the district was "principally boys and old men".⁴⁰ The report from Clarence a few years later stated that labour had "been very scarce and of a very inferior description".⁴¹ Farmers were forced to break with the past and began to mechanize their farms. By 1881 the way of life in much of rural Tasmania was changing. Between 1876-7 and 1885-6 the number of chaff-cutters in use rose from 197 to 669, mowers increased from 46 to 234 and double-furrow plows from 33 to 740.⁴²

38. Census of Tasmania, 1891, op.cit.

39. Johnston, R. M., Tasmanian Official Record, 1892, op.cit, p.190.

40. S. of T., 1874.

41. Ibid, 1880.

42. Ibid, 1877 and 1886.

In 1874, 48,000 acres were reaped by hand and 9,500 by machine. By 1881 the position had been reversed. The area machine-reaped had risen to 29,000 acres and that manually harvested fallen to 22,500 acres.⁴³

During the sixties settlers had begun to push out into new country along the North-West Coast, in the North East, and in the Huon and Channel districts in the South. Legislation between 1857 and 1870 opened these areas to the pioneer and the colony entered a new phase of land settlement. The most spectacular development occurred along the seventy-five miles of coastline between Port Sorell and Circular Head. Settlers slowly ringbarked, axed, burnt and hoed their way westward. By 1881 they had reached the Duck and Montagu Rivers.⁴⁴ The whole coast was in transition from virgin forest to cleared farmland. The towns rapidly acquired the material features of civilization. The hinterland displayed every phase of pioneering from established farms and comfortable homes to bark shanties and patches of cultivation, hidden in the gaunt stands of dead and dying timber.

43. Ibid, 1874 and 1881.

44. 'Report of Collector of Agricultural Statistics at Russell', S. of T., 1881.

By 1881 the North West had become one of the colony's most important rural areas. Twenty years earlier there had been only 11,000 acres in cultivation, representing 4 per cent of the island's farmland.⁴⁵ In the early eighties there were nearly 60,000 cultivated acres along the coast, and the Port Sorell district led the colony in production of oats, peas and potatoes and was the third producer of wheat and turnips.⁴⁶ It had a greater area under crop and artificial grass than any other district. By 1891 the coast's 115,000 acres represented 22 per cent of all cultivated land in the colony.⁴⁷ There were only 8,500 people west of Deloraine in 1861. Twenty years later there were 18,500 and in 1891 over 27,000. The rate of increase for the period 1857-91 was 620 per cent.⁴⁸ The towns grew rapidly during the seventies and eighties. Devonport rose from 500 to 1800 to become the fourth town in the colony. Latrobe grew from 700 to 1560 and Ulverstone developed from a small settlement of under 100 inhabitants to a thriving port of 1100.⁴⁹

45. S. of T., 1861.

46. Ibid, 1881.

47. Ibid, 1891.

48. Census of Tasmania 1891, op.cit.

49. Ibid.

In these areas of heavy rainfall, fertile soil and dense forest, the task of the pioneer was long and arduous. The collector of statistics at Horton in the far North-West reported that "the custom on commencing is to clear out all the scrub and timber under eighteen inches, leaving the rest standing dead. This is the heaviest item in the farmer's work, and has all to be done with the pick and axe. The farming thereafter..., has to be carried on in and out amongst large trees, which are annually falling down, and interrupting work and giving great trouble".⁵⁰ The pursuit of independence on the land required physical strength, determination and stoical courage. It took a year even to partially clear one acre,⁵¹ and a lifetime to hack a farm from the wilderness.

There were pockets of new settlement in the Huon and Channel districts, the Derwent Valley, the North East and on Tasman Peninsula. These districts were usually heavily timbered and development followed a common pattern. Settlers were poor, living for long periods on credit.⁵² Many in the North East and North West worked temporarily at the mines to supplement their income.⁵³ Huon farmers found casual

50. S. of T., 1871.

51. Cl., 10 Aug. 1895.

52. "Report of Collectors of Statistics", Port Sorell, in S. of T., 1870.

53. "Report of Collectors of Statistics", Horton, in S. of T., 1874.

employment in the timber industry.⁵⁴ Mixed farming was the rule. In the North settlers combined dairying with small scale grain and vegetable growing. Orcharding and dairying were replacing grain growing in the Huon. During the seventies the area in orchards increased by over 60 per cent, while that under wheat declined by half.⁵⁵ Potatoes, yielding from three to four and one-half tons per acre,⁵⁶ were universally grown. They were the main cash crop and a staple article of diet. Port Sorell, Russell and the Huon were the colony's largest producers, growing half the total crop. Raspberries were grown in 'immense quantities' by small settlers in the Huon, who looked "upon the ripening of this crop as a sort of harvest". The earnings, distributed among the settlers at the end of the year enabled them to buy supplies they otherwise would not have been able to obtain.⁵⁷ Methods were rudimentary. In 1881 there were only thirty-six farm machines of any description in the Huon, George Town, Portland and Carnarvon.⁵⁸ The collector of statistics at

54. 'Report of Collector of Statistics, Franklin, in S. of T., 1875

55. S. of T., 1871 and 1851

56. Ibid, 1881.

57. 'Report of Collector of Statistics, Franklin, S. of T., 1872.

58. S. of T., 1881.

Carnarvon reported that "in machinery and farm implements there is not the least improvement whatever, the hoe being used more than the plough".⁵⁹ His colleague at Horton explained that the farmer was "rigorously confined to the use of the simplest and strongest instruments, and the simplest processes of agriculture".⁶⁰

There were important differences between the old and new farming areas. Large properties predominated in the old. In 1891 the average size of properties over one acreⁱⁿ the ten electorates⁶¹ of the South East, Midlands and Northern Plains, was over 950 acres.⁶² In 1881 there were roughly 300 properties of 2,000 acres and over, totalling about 1,500,000 acres, or approximately one-quarter of all alienated land.⁶³ Small holdings were the rule in the new districts. Over 70 per cent of all Crown Land sold, between 1857 and 1891, in the counties of Buckingham, Devon, Dorset, Kent and Wellington, was in blocks of 100 acres or under. Only 3.5 per cent was in lots of over 500 acres.⁶⁴ It was officially estimated that nine-tenths of all land sold in the

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid, 1871.

61. Brighton, Sorell, Richmond, Evandale, Campbell Town, Oatlands, Cumberland, Glamorgan and Fingal.

62. Census of Tasmania, 1891, op.cit.

63. 'Assessment Rolls' in H. T. G. 1881, op.cit.

64. S. of T., 1857-91.

decade 1868-78 was in blocks of 100 acres and under.⁶⁵

In five districts in 1881 there were only about seventy properties over 500 acres.⁶⁶ In 1891 the average size of all properties over one acre in the electorates of East and West Devon, Wellington, Kingborough and Franklin was under 120 acres.⁶⁷

The old districts had been settled by men of capital and social position when the island was an autocratically governed prison farm. After 1856 society remained hierarchical, divisions between employer and employee being punctiliously observed. Labourers were employed on long contracts, receiving both board and lodging. The provisions of the old Masters and Servants Act were still enforced.⁶⁸ Settlers in the new districts were labourers, tenant farmers' sons, tradesmen and poor immigrants; men of working and lower middle-class origin. These areas of recent settlement were "emphatically the land of the cockatoo or peasant farmer".⁶⁹ Thick forests on the fringe of settlement held little allure for the wealthy. "There is no opening for educated intelligence or for capital", wrote the collector of statistics at Horton, "muscle and skill are all in all".⁷⁰ Men inured to labour and low living

65. H. A. J., XXV, 1878, paper 102.

66. 'Assessment Rolls', op. cit.

67. Census of Tasmania, 1891, op.cit.

68. See speeches in L. C. on Masters & Servants Act, M., 24 Aug. 188

69. 'Report of Collector at Horton', S. of T., 1871.

70. Ibid.

standards were the ones who succeeded as pioneers. Labourers in the new districts worked by the day or week and were often themselves small landowners. The collector of statistics at Port Sorell said the labour force had been drained away by workers becoming landowners. His colleague at Horton observed that "there are here no regular employers of labour of the capitalist class. The master of the day is very often the servant of the morrow".⁷¹ The franchise reached deeper into society in the new settlements. In East and West Devon, Wellington, Franklin and Kingborough 85 per cent of adult males had the vote, compared with 62 per cent in the six Midland electorates. The new districts had neither established families nor entrenched privilege. There were no significant variations of wealth or social background. Society was fluid and egalitarian. Changes which came slowly in the established settlements were quickly accepted in the new. The first real break with the social mores of the past was made on the frontiers of settlement.

Hobart had a population of just over 21,000. It had grown slowly, increasing by only 3,000 between 1857

71 S. of T., 1871.

and 1881.⁷² Hobart's hinterland is more restricted than that of any other Australian capital. During the depression it was stagnant or actually declining in economic importance. Launceston captured much of the mining business. But the capital's commercial life quickened in the late seventies. Many of the "dilapidated houses in which the city abounded" were replaced and the water supply and sewerage were improved.⁷³ Industry was confined to small family establishments which produced consumer goods like boots and shoes, candles and soap, clothing, beer and jam. Seven jam factories produced 2,500,000 lbs. of jam and pulp in 1885.⁷⁴ By 1881 the whaling industry had further declined, but ten ships produced 316 tons of oil valued at £20,000.⁷⁵ The port handled 52 per cent of the island's trade and exported about £100,000 worth of jam, fruit, hops, whale oil, timber and wool.⁷⁶ Hobart was a 'slow old city', where one could "meet 'milch kine' wandering at freewill down the High Street, undisturbed by the occasional van, bus or car",⁷⁷ where "Irish jaunting carts

72. Census of Tasmania 1891, op.cit.

73. Coghlan, op.cit. IV, p.1824.

74. Johnston, R.M., Tasmanian Official Handbook, 1891, (Hobt.1891) p.371.

75. S. of T., 1881.

76. S. of T., 1881.

77. M., 26th Feb, 1887.

stood at the corners as they might have done when George III was King;"⁷⁸ where "shopkeepers were to be seen enjoying a 'crack' with a neighbour at the doors of their establishments";⁷⁹ and where it was common to see "the old fashioned Englishwoman with long curls and a mushroom hat, the classical Englishwoman such as George Cruickshank drew for the pages of Charles Dickens' novels".⁸⁰

Launceston, the commercial centre of the north, had a population of 12,500. Being closer to the mainland and the centre for what had been the most prosperous rural area, it had not suffered as severely as Hobart during the depression. It had increased by a few hundred in the sixties, by 2,000 in the seventies and 4,500 during the eighties, at a rate over 15 per cent faster than the capital.⁸¹ The decline of the agricultural hinterland was more than offset by the development of mining. Launceston was unquestionably the mining capital. In 1871, 17 of the Colony's 20 mining companies had their offices in the town. Ten years later there were 157 companies in the town⁸² compared with Hobart's 33.⁸³

78. Ibid.

79. T.N. 11 Aug. 1886

80. O'Rell, M., John Bull & Co., (Lond. 1894), p.214.

81. Census of Tasmania. 1891., op.cit.

82. Blainey, G., 'Population Movements in Tasmania', op.cit., p.66.

83. Walch's Red Book, 1881.

Launceston speculators held most of the shares in Mt Bischoff and Beaconsfield, which by 1891 had paid dividends equal to one-third of the colony's bank deposits.⁸⁴ Money poured into the town. The city fathers materialized their optimism by building the Albert Hall which was said to be one of the twelve largest halls in the world.⁸⁵ The price of building sites increased by 50 per cent in the early eighties as banks and commercial houses engaged in a building spree which transformed the business section of the town.⁸⁶

By 1881 the colony's population was increasing faster than at any time since the mid-fifties. The increase had amounted to only 2.8 per cent during the first half of the seventies, the rate speeded to 10.7 per cent in the second half and to 16.5 per cent during the first half of the eighties.⁸⁷ Emigration exceeded immigration by 4,000 between 1871 and 1875. But during the next five years the tide changed and the colony gained by 3,000. The trend was consolidated in the eighties when the gain amounted to 16,500.⁸⁸ For the first time in a generation the colony provided opportunities for the native youth. The whole structure of the population was affected.

84. Blainey, G., 'Population Movements in Tasmania', op.cit.p.66.

85. Ibid.

86. Coghlan, T. A., op.cit., IV, p.1824.

87. 'Statistical Summary of Tasmania', op.cit.

88. Ibid.

In 1871 only 20.5 per cent of males were in the twenty to forty age group. By 1885 this group accounted for 25.8 per cent.⁸⁹ The marriage rate for 1876-1881 was 43 per cent higher than that of the preceding five years.^{90.}

During the last decades of the century education penetrated deeper into society. The Public Schools Act of 1868 enforced compulsory attendance for children between seven and twelve. Between 1871 and 1890 the number of Government schools increased from 130 to 240 and the number of scholars rose by 80 per cent.⁹¹ Only 53 per cent pf the population could read and write in 1861. By 1891 70.3 per cent were literate.⁹² A letter from 'one of the great mass of working men' in the Tasmanian News, said there were "moving about amongst the humble classes men" of thought and education" who must make their presence felt".⁹³ The more literate and prosperous community made greater use of communications. The number of letters, newspapers, and packets posted almost doubled between 1872 and 1881. Telegraph messages increased from 32,000 to 147,000.⁹⁴

89. S. of T., 1885 and 1871

90. Statistical Summary of Tasmania, op.cit.

91. 'Statistical Summary of Tasmania', op.cit.

92. S. of T., 1861 and 1891.

93. 17 Nov.1883.

94. 'Statistical Summary of Tasmania', op.cit.

By the early eighties the stain of convictism was finally rinsed from the fabric of society. The free settlers who had lived through the convict era and embossed their ideals on the life of the colony were dying off. Those still living had lost much of their power and prestige. Men with no experience of the convict system began to fill the benches of Parliament. In the Assembly of 1881 there were fourteen of this group, in 1887 the number had risen to 25, and by 1894 there were only four men who had lived any part of their adult life in the penal settlement.⁹⁵ The stigma of crime and debasement was being erased from the working classes. The emancipist group was thinning. The origin of those remaining was being forgotten by a new generation. The number of prisoners in Tasmanian gaols fell from 644 in 1887 to 182 in 1890, or from 62 to 12.5 per 10,000 people. Paupers in institutions declined from 1113 to 802, from 107 to 56 per 10,000.⁹⁶ The consumption of spirits fell from 2 gallons per head in 1857⁹⁷ to .8 gallons per head in 1890.⁹⁸ In 1876, 174 persons per 10,000 were apprehended for drunkenness. By 1890 the number had

95. Calculated from Walch's Red Books, The Cyclopaedia of Tasmania (Hobt.1898), and obituaries in newspapers.

96. Johnston, R.M., op.cit., 1892, p.414.

97. H.A.J., VIII, 1861, paper 161.

98. Johnston, R.M., op.cit., 1892, p.409.

fallen to only 80 per 10,000.⁹⁹ The number of convictions for serious crimes was lower in Tasmania than any other colony. The Australian average was 7.3 per 10,000, the Tasmanian 3.7.¹⁰⁰ In discussing these statistics, the Government Statistician, R. M. Johnston wrote - "What better proof could be given of the fact that pauperism and crime are simply noxious foreign weeds ...Tasmania's advance in material progress is not half so cheering as this indication of her power to eliminate from her social system the noxious poisons of pauperism and crime." The time when Van Diemen's Land was synonymous with crime and debauchery had passed. The colony had become a law-abiding, tranquil and conventional society. The cosmopolitan Max O'Rell had never seen¹⁰¹ any people more peaceful, more ordinary, more bourgeois¹⁰¹ than the Tasmanians of the early nineties .

The break with the convict past and the new prosperity were concomitant and interrelated. Together they produced deep and lasting changes.

Mining strengthened the economic position of the towns. They were no longer completely dependent on the farming districts. The stagnation of agriculture weakened the power and influence of established country families. In 1879

99. Ibid, p.405.

100. Ibid.

101. O'Rell, M., op.cit.p.214.

the value of mineral exports exceeded that of wool for the first time. In 1894 potatoes, fruit and jam, those products of the mixed farming districts, passed wool as export earners. Wool had earned 48 per cent of the export income in 1867. By 1890 it earned only 28 per cent.¹⁰² The pastoral industry had ceased to dominate the economy. The possession of large sheep walks was no longer the only avenue to wealth. The position of those groups which had been all powerful since the twenties was being challenged. The simple social structure was diversified. The increase of fluid capital created an unparalleled social mobility and lines of division were smudged. New groups and new individuals gained economic competence, articulation and self confidence. They looked to parliament to satisfy their needs and ambitions.

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Few constitutional changes were made between 1856 and 1881. In 1870 the franchise was lowered for both Houses. It was not intended to increase significantly the number of electors, but "to restore the franchise to those who had lost it since 1854", as the result of depression.¹⁰³ The freehold

102. Statistical Summary of Tasmania, op.cit.

103. Speech by W. R. Giblin, M., 15 Sept. 1870.

qualification for the Council was dropped from £50, to £30 pounds. For the Assembly the qualification for landowners was lowered from one hundred pounds to eighty pounds. The number of electors increased from 11,000 to 13,000 for the Assembly and from 2,000 to 2,700 for the Council.¹⁰⁴ Extra representation was given to the North-West Coast. Devon was divided and the electorate of Wellington was created.

Political instability marked the seventies. Seven ministries followed one another in and out of office as factions fought for political control. "The strife of party faction", wrote Fenton, "absorbed the thoughts and time of the Legislature to an extent which almost entirely excluded the business of the country".¹⁰⁵ The colony's finances were chaotic, but the factions could not unite on a common policy. The "very measures proposed by one party when in power were fiercely opposed by them when brought forward by their rivals".¹⁰⁶ There was a peremptory need for roads and railways to give access to the new mining and farming districts. However, the divided Assembly was unable to overcome the Council's resistance

104. S. of T., 1870 and 1871.

105. Fenton, J., op.cit. p.365.

106. Ibid.

to Public Works. But by the end of the decade, when factionalism reached a pitch of intensity, changing economic and social conditions forced modifications in the practice of politics.

On October 30, 1879, William Robert Giblin formed his Coalition Ministry. Uniting faction leaders, the new Government ushered in a period of stable government. Apart from opposition from a few arch-conservatives in the Council, and the radical Hobart Evening Star, the Coalition was greeted by the electorate. "By co-alition", said a Tasmanian Tribune editorial, "a fatal blow has been dealt to personal Government ... and we may now bless the men and the day, when by the holy alliance just established, the common enemy to popular liberties and Responsible Government, has been routed".¹⁰⁷

The new Government reorganized the finances. Additional taxation was levied to meet liabilities and increased interest. A real and personal estate duty of ninepence in the pound was levied on land and dividends, an excise duty of threepence per gallon was placed on beer and the customs tariff was remodelled. In April 1881 a highly successful loan of £300,000 was raised and by the middle of the year the financial position had greatly improved. Giblin's financial statement for 1881 was "the most gratifying ... Tasmanian legislators had ever listened to",¹⁰⁸

107. 31 Oct. 1879.

108. M, 2 Jan. 1882.

and promised a surplus for the year.

The parliamentary peace which the coalition introduced was reflected in the electorate. Contentment grew with prosperity. Nineteen out of thirty two seats were uncontested in the election of 1882. The Mercury counted twenty-four supporters of the Ministry, seven independent or doubtful members and one active oppositionist among the successful candidates.¹⁰⁹ The social composition of the new Assembly was similar to previous ones. Ten landed proprietors represented country electorates, six or seven urban seats were held by merchants. There were five lawyers, a doctor, a newspaper proprietor, a surveyor, a retired clergyman and a retired Indian Civil Servant. One third of the members belonged to the Tasmanian Club.¹¹⁰ Opportunities for dissent were circumscribed by the demise of established liberal papers in Hobart and Launceston. The Cornwall Chronicle, founded in February 1835, appeared for the last time on Launceston streets on August 28, 1880. The Tasmanian Tribune failed in October 1879. Two attempts were made to start a new liberal paper in Hobart, but both the Evening Star and Southern Star folded up after a year. For many

109. 1 June 1882.

110. Calculated from lists prepared by the Tasmanian Working Party of the Dictionary of National Biography.

months no strong challenge was given to the conservatism of the Hobart Mercury and Launceston Examiner.

Despite three changes in leadership and numerous reshufflings, the Coalition Government continued in power until early in 1887. This period was a watershed in Tasmanian political development. One slope led back to the beginnings of self-government and the anti-transportation crusade, the other on to Federation and the twentieth century. The Coalition broke the factions which had been rife since the fifties. After 1887 factionalism was still evident but principle began to assume a greater role in the polarization of parties. In 1880, eight members of the original Parliament were still sitting. By 1885, with the deaths of T. D. Chapman, F. M. Innes, James Macleanachan, Henry Butler, J. D. Balfe, J. M. Wilson and Thomas Field, only Adye Douglas remained to represent the first generation of Tasmanian politicians. Only four members of the 1882 Assembly were first elected before 1870. The tone of political life changed. Parliaments of the fifties and sixties were characterized by quarrelling, personal abuse and invective. Newspapers were flamboyant, irresponsible and often scurrilous. Politicians of the eighties tended to be more temperate and outwardly respectable. Newspapers evinced a greater moral

earnestness and their expression was less colourful. During 1882-3 Legislative Council opposition to public works was broken and £700,000 was voted for railways. Parliament began to have greater influence on the everyday life of the colony. The principle of state enterprise had been accepted.

The calm of the early eighties was superficial. The political centre of gravity shifted with geographic and social changes. In 1857, 60 per cent of the population lived in the South and South-East.¹¹¹ Till 1870 this part of the island had seventeen of thirty Assembly seats and nine of fifteen Council seats. By 1870 only 52 per cent of the population lived in the South.¹¹² Thirty years later the percentage had fallen to 38 per cent.¹¹³ After the redistribution of 1903 the North had nineteen Assembly seats, the South thirteen and the West Coast four. Living in a position of political and social inferiority, the poorer sections of the community proved receptive to the progressive ideas seeping through society. Retaining their young and vigorous members, reinforced by migration, rendered aware and articulate by education and lifted on a wave of prosperity, they began to exert an unprecedented influence on political life. From the eighties the working classes could be no longer disregarded.

111. S. of T., 1857.

112. Ibid, 1870.

113. Ibid, 1901.

Ideas in harmony with the booming economy began to flourish. In the early eighties the horizon seemed to promise a new day of limitless progress. An editorial in the Telegraph claimed that:

The natural resources of Tasmania are undoubtedly immense, and with proper care in their development she will be as well able to support, in comparative comfort, a population of two millions as she is now able to provide for her one hundred thousand. We have forests that have never resounded with the ring of the axe, rivers that the white man has never seen, rich soil untouched by a spade, iron and coal, copper and silver, tin and gold, in almost fabulous quantities add richness... 114.

Political thought was tinted by this sanguine mood.

The editor of the Telegraph was pleased to notice that "through the stir caused by the development of our mining interests, political lethargy is fast passing away",¹¹⁵ while a writer in the Southern Star could "already see signs of a greater desire for reform than has hitherto existed in Tasmania" ¹¹⁶

The Mercury described how "the feverish spirit of change and unrest finds its way into every line of business, into all the professions, and is slowly but surely undermining the steady foundation on which our society is built".¹¹⁷ Tasmania was in transformation. Liberal ideas, lifted by winds of change, were swirling across society.

114. 20 July 1881.

115. Ibid.

116. 9 Sept. 1882.

117. 11 Nov. 1882.

LIBERALISM.INSPIRATION. ORGANIZATION. OPPOSITION.

In Hobart in the early seventies a small group of young men formed the Minerva Club, a "kind of democratic society."¹ Members discussed a wide range of intellectual topics, held debates, played chess and gathered "on the 14th of July, to eat a rattling good dinner ... and listen to speeches which told democracy to roll on and make the world its own".² Club president was the ardent young law student Andrew Inglis Clark. With three friends he edited the Quadrilateral, a monthly journal of politics, philosophy and literature, addressed to those "who being dissatisfied with the present condition of mankind, seek to improve ... a condition of things which they believe is not consistent with justice or the well-being of the race".³ The first issue appeared in January 1874, the last at the end of the year. Unsigned articles⁴ discussed

1. D. T., 16 Nov. 1907.

2. Ibid.

3. Quadrilateral, (Hobt. 1874.), p.225

4. It has been established that Clark was the author of an article on the Hare System appearing in the November issue See - Piesse, E.L., Bibliography of Proportional Representation in Tasmania, (Hobt. 1913), p.45. Evidence of content, style suggest that Clark wrote most of the political articles.

many contemporary intellectual problems including the faith-materialism controversy, spiritualism, and phrenology.

Original poetry appeared in most issues; the first contained an ode in memory of T. C. Gregson. The opening article of the first issue introduced a number of themes which recurred constantly in later numbers. The author displayed a fervid belief in progress, claimed commercial enterprise was pre-eminently the instrument of human advance and deprecated the blind worship of the past which obstructed the path of the reformer. He applauded the moral and political revolution spreading across the earth. "Around that revolution", he said, "all our hopes collect, nor do we deem our own community too small to participate in its results".

The political articles were infused with the middle class radicalism epitomized in the later works of J.S. Mill. One writer believed many would find Mill's autobiography more spirit-stirring than the loftiest epic.⁵ The contributors urged a farrago of traditional liberal reforms, particularly necessary in Tasmania, which they regarded as a conservative corner in the hands of a reactionary

5. Quadrilateral, p.45

oligarchy. Manhood suffrage was demanded on grounds of both principle and expediency. The writer thought political equality axiomatic, but argued that extension of the franchise would also destroy privilege, safeguard society against revolution, and provide training in citizenship. Three articles on the Australian Constitutions urged reform of Upper Houses and separation of executives and legislatures. Federation was advocated as the obvious destiny of the colonies. An article on 'Public Lands' anticipated many of the theories of Henry George. The writer claimed the leasing of all lands would prevent monopolies and speculation and provide sufficient revenue for all Government purposes. An article on 'England at the close of 1873' discussed the capital-labour conflict. While thinking workers justified in their resistance, the writer believed human nature was "too strong for any system that aim(ed)... to suppress every phase of individuality". He did not regard labour and capital as essentially antagonistic, but advocated a system of co-operatives and trusted to see it "universally adopted before the present century clos(ed)".⁶ A further article urged the

6. Quadrilateral, p.18.

establishment of National Banks, Provident Institutes, Insurance Offices and Cooperative Societies as means of narrowing the gulf between rich and poor. Young Tasmanians, far from the fountainhead of liberal thought, were directing its principles to the mores of their island home.

A. I. Clark himself was born in Hobart on 24 February 24 1848, the day which saw the fall of the French monarchy and kindled the flame of revolution which by the end of the year had spread across the face of Europe. He was the product of the great age of liberal reform and the first generation of Tasmanians to grow up in a free society. His father was a personal friend of Dry, Gregson, Weston and West, the leaders of the Anti-Transportation movement.⁷ He was educated locally and entered the family's engineering business. At twenty-four he entered a legal office and was admitted to the bar in 1878. The same year he was elected for the Assembly seat of Norfolk Plains, but was defeated by a local candidate in the 1882 elections. For the next five years he played a prominent

7. Reynolds, J., 'Premiers and Political Leaders' in Green F. C. (ed.), A Century of Responsible Government. (Hobart 1956), p.175.

part in the liberal movement of the capital. In 1887 he was elected for South Hobart which he continued to represent till elevated to the bench in 1898. He was Attorney General in the Fysh and Braddon Ministries and played a leading part in the Federal movement.

Other members of the Minerva Club later became prominent in public life. School teacher James Rule became Director of Education; R. M. Johnston, an auditor in the Government Railways, became Government Statistician, Registrar General and one of the colony's intellectual leaders. The young conveyancer F. W. Piesse sat in both Tasmanian and Federal Parliaments. Journalist Ronald Smith was elected to the House of Assembly and edited the Tasmanian Democrat. Crippled librarian A. J. Taylor and grocer Edward Ivey both played prominent parts in the progressive movements of the last quarter-century.

By the early eighties ideas discussed by members of the Minerva Club had spread beyond the confines of the debating hall. Criticism of status quo gained directness and intensity. Liberal newspapers articulated the new spirit. New organizations channelled discontent. The Southern Star, which first appeared on Hobart streets on August 28, 1882, promised to attack

existing conditions by all constitutional means, to challenge the power of landed proprietors, and to advocate a more liberal and popular form of government. Colonel Windle Hill St. Hill, who edited the paper for a short time, was one of Hobart's most colourful personalities and a leading radical for several decades. He served with great distinction in the Maori Wars, being frequently mentioned in dispatches. He had the unique honour of being promoted from lieutenant to major in one Government Gazette. He served in China and India where he married the daughter of General London. He arrived in Hobart early in 1875 as the private secretary of Governor W. A. Weld. His passion was the turf. In New Zealand he won many races on his own mare, later compiled the 'Tasmanian Turf Register', and was frequently in financial difficulties. He died in 1918 at the age of eighty-one after catching a chill on the Elwick Racecourse.⁸

When the Southern Star folded up after a year of publication the equipment was bought by Henry Horatio Gill. He was born at New Norfolk in 1840, was educated locally, and entered a legal office. Like many young Tasmanians

8. Obituary in M., and D. P., 1 June 1918.

of his era he left the colony and spent a number of years on the mainland. Returning in 1865 he lived in the North-East and was one of the first discoverers of tin in the area. He later became a liberal member for Kingborough in the House of Assembly. Gill owned, but did not edit, the Tasmanian News until 1897.⁹ It was the mouthpiece of advanced opinion till the rise of labour papers in the nineties. First published on the evening of November 17, 1883, it reported the formation of the Hobart Trades and Labour Council five days later. Its platform included manhood suffrage, triennial parliaments, payment of members, and land and tax reforms. An editorial of early 1884 claimed that:

We have the need of a revolution; and that a radical one, and assuredly we have the need of a Danton in every village of the island. Tasmania is practically ruled by a little knot of fogies, propped and supported by a somewhat larger knot of flunkies, to the exclusion of the great mass of the people. ...This system, which has prevailed since the colony acquired a Constitution, has to be effectually broken down, burned up and made to cease from the land forever. 10.

The liberal mood of the early eighties was ambivalent. The confidence of the new prosperity merged with ideas which had been spreading through Western society for several generations.

9. Obituary in D. P., 5 March 1914.

10. 11 January 1884.

Thoroughly imbued with the doctrine of progress, the liberals fretted at all restraints which prevented the colony from moving on and upward to the "dawn of a new and glorious day of human civilization and progress".¹¹ But the highway to the brave new world was blocked by conservative obduracy and public apathy, the "national curse" of the colony.¹²

"We cannot shut our eyes to the fact", said a Tasmanian News editorial, "that we live in a transition age ... the spirit of the age is progressive".¹³ To many liberals it seemed that Tasmania alone lagged behind in the glorious voyage of progress. A list of franchise qualifications of twenty six states in Europe, the Americas and Australasia was printed in the Tasmanian News to impress on the public how terribly backward the colony was even in respect to "some of the old countries in Europe".¹⁴ Democracy was associated with progress, conservatism with stagnation. Democratic institutions were both intrinsically valuable and necessary for material advancement. Conservative ideas and politicians, and above all, the narrow franchise, were

11. T. N., 20 April 1886.

12. Ibid., 12 Jan. 1886.

13. Ibid., 20 April 1886.

14. Ibid., 31 July 1884.

blamed for the multitude of economic and social maladies diagnosed by the Liberals when examining the state of the nation.

The men of the early eighties were sensitive about the convict past. They saw an intimate connexion between the illiberal constitution and the traditions of the system. Liberals demanded the removal of the 'badge of inferiority' which had been stamped on the working classes. A Southern Star editorial described how "Founded as a penal settlement, it long ago threw off that incubus. But the bad spirit engendered by those who in the bad old days rode triumphant over their fellow men has not yet been thoroughly eradicated".¹⁵ The warm rays of ascendant liberalism were dispelling the lingering shades of the past.

Tasmania provided abundant scope for reforming zeal. But the ideas and inspiration of the movement came from outside. Political and intellectual developments in Europe and the other Australian colonies had an impact on local attitudes. Overseas and mainlands events received a wide coverage in the local press. One reason for the failure of the Cornwall Chronicle in 1880 was the wide circulation of

mainland periodicals.¹⁶ Liberal victories throughout the Western world encouraged local reformers and magnified the significance of their struggles. A writer in the Tasmanian News urged working men to "think of the Hon. W. E. Gladstone adding upwards of 2,000,000 names to the electoral roll".¹⁷

Sources of ideas were many and various. The Reverend J. I. Gellibrand, who stood as a liberal candidate in 1886 and edited the Tasmanian News for a short period, was influenced by the lives of St Paul, Daniel, Job, Elijah, Doctor Arnold, Doctor Johnson, Garibaldi, General Gordon, Charles Kingsley and works of Dickens, Shakespeare and J. S. Mill.¹⁸ P. O. Fysh, brought up in circles "where Cobden, Bright and the great liberals of the passing half-century resided", was attracted to Cromwell and Washington and deeply influenced by Carlyle.¹⁹ Clark was steeped in the writings of Mill, Jefferson and Mazzini. A portrait of the Italian patriot hung in every room of his home.²⁰ He was a republican who venerated American ideas and institutions, a staunch

16. C. C., 30 Aug. 1880.

17. 7 May 1884.

18. Obituary in T. N., 14 Nov. 1887.

19. T. N., 26 June 1884.

20. Reynolds, J., op.cit., p. 179.

supporter of natural rights, individualism and free trade, a romantic nationalist who applauded the heroes of the Risorgimento and who advocated Federation from the early seventies.

But Clark was not wholly typical of Tasmanian liberalism despite his pivotal position in the political movement. His habit of relating all questions to first principles and world movements was an exotic growth in the hard-earthed realities of colonial politics. His idealism was jostled unceremoniously in the scimmages of parliamentary life. His liberalism was doctrinaire and consistent. Many of his contemporaries were resilient and empirical in their political outlook. The Launceston Examiner complained that Clark had "a weakness for theoretical sublimities in preference to practical possibilities", but hoped that the cares of office would "wear away the rough edges of Utopianism".²¹

The passing of the first generation of settlers and the warmth of the new prosperity softened Tasmanian conservatism. Recurrence of depression and the threat of new unionism in the nineties caused a relapse into intransigence. Resistance was limper in the eighties than in the decade

21. 30 March 1887.

before or after. The more perceptive conservatives, seeing the encroaching tide of change, prepared for a strategic retreat from positions held since the fifties. Mercury editor Henry Nicholls was the most influential and articulate of these conservatives. He was London born and arrived in Victoria in 1853 at the age of thirty-three. He worked for a time on the Diggers' Advocate, resigned to try his luck on the goldfields and later edited the Ballarat Star. He assumed control of the Mercury in 1883.²²

Doubting the orthodox view of progress, he had a Burkean dislike of change. He sensed hidden dangers in mass democracy unsuspected by the liberals. But he also recognized the inevitability of the democratic advance. Tasmanian developments he viewed with resigned pessimism. In an editorial of 1885, he wrote:

We must now prepare the way for the future and that is all we can do, and all that is worthwhile attempting to do. A succession of events has caused the fact to be recognized that a great change is impending - a change which means a new departure for this Colony, and which must produce effects far beyond what it is possible for anyone to conceive at the present time ...

23

22. Cyclopaedia of Tasmania, (Hobt. 1898), p.375.

23. 5 Oct. 1885.

It is difficult to draw lines of division between liberal and conservative groups. Party development was embryonic and inconsistency was rife in a community which eschewed the doctrinaire. Both drew on a common reservoir of ideas and values. But it is possible to isolate a number of attitudes which polarized social and political groups. As Sir Charles Dilke pointed out, the term conservative in Australia did not express the feeling of a political party, but the outlook of those who had anything to lose by social change. "Those who have something", he explained, "object to giving a share in the government to those who have nothing; those who have much object to political equality with those who have less".²⁴ Most Tasmanian conservatives of the prosperous eighties were satisfied with the status quo. They believed that if moderation and forbearance were exercised the Constitution contained all that was "essential to the good government and happiness of the people".²⁵ Change would upset the balance of the Constitution. Politics, they believed, was a realm for practical men of affairs applying a cautious empiricism. They looked askance at the reforming zeal of the liberals.

24. Dilke, C. W., op.cit. p.317.

25. L. E., 2nd Nov. 1881.

There was a strong undertone of idealism in the liberal movement. On the eve of a bye-election for East Hobart, a letter in the Mercury addressed to those working for the return of A. I. Clark, urged that they "show that the great principle that animates you in this struggle is to raise the social and intellectual condition of your fellow man".²⁶ The liberals demanded reforms. They wanted equality of political rights. Manhood suffrage was their prime objective from the early eighties. They urged ancillary reforms like equal electoral districts, the abolition of plural voting, payment of members and triennial parliaments.

Conservatives thought it unsafe to enfranchise people with no 'stake in the country'. They demanded a preponderant influence for property, wealth and education. It was undesirable, they believed, for the poorer classes to have their own parliamentary representatives. Men of wealth and experience should hold the reins of power above the heads of the masses and legislate for the good of the whole community. "There is no fear of the wealthy classes", said a Mercury editorial, "the fear is rather that ignorance shall

be supreme."²⁷ From the eighties liberals developed greater interest in the amelioration of social conditions. Conservatives, clinging to laissez-faire doctrines, believed that interference with enterprise was unnecessary and unwarranted.

Projected reforms were not the only factors dividing liberal and conservative. Of equal importance was the forces in the community which they were prepared to utilize and their readiness or otherwise to face the hostility of those in a position of social and economic prominence. The liberals appealed to the rising popular movement which eventually found an outlet in the labour party. They co-operated with and occasionally became the instrument of that movement. Moderate conservatives of the eighties and nineties did introduce reforms, but they wished to retain political power in the hands of the wealthy. The liberals reformed through faith in political equality, conservatives through fear of consequences if reform was withheld.

From the mid-eighties liberalism was coloured by more radical ideas seeping in from outside. New aspirations were created, new policies shaped and new fears aroused. As the movement marched slowly left, the more cautious straggled

from the ranks to be surrounded and absorbed by the advanced scouts of conservatism. "Yes," wrote the editor of the Tasmanian News, "We are living in an age when Socialism is gradually forging its way to the front. Those who are, in many instances unconsciously, being moulded by the spirit of the age, if they will pause to examine themselves will be surprised to find that they have become in great measure Socialists".²⁸ Close contact with the trade union movement awakened the liberals' interest in social legislation. The Trades and Labour Council (established 1883) constantly urged their liberal allies to introduce legislation to enforce the Eight Hour Day, reform the Masters and Servants Act, regulate employment in factories and mines, and legalize the trade unions. Clark was initially opposed to legislation aimed at introducing the Eight Hour Day. He voted against the measure in the Assembly during 1888 and 1889. But in 1891 he gave the Bill his wholehearted support. He changed his opinion because "he had a revelation and had come to believe that shortening of working hours was the secret of all progress this world was making materially and morally".²⁹

28. 20 April 1886.

29. M., 12 Sept. 1891.

The strikes and depression of the early nineties and the accompanying social distress and intellectual turmoil pushed advanced liberalism even farther beyond the point it had reached in the early eighties. As never before liberals faced the dilemma of moving with the popular tide into the higher reaches of radicalism or drifting back into conservative resistance. Social legislation assumed far greater importance to the new generation of liberals. They committed themselves to an unprecedented use of state power to ameliorate social conditions. Liberal policies at century-end included such planks as compulsory early closing of business establishments, old age pensions, factory legislation, workers compensation, the basic wage, and conciliation and arbitration of industrial disputes.

In the early eighties liberals had no definite programme of land reform. But Henry George's theories of land nationalization had an influence on local reformers. 'Progress and Poverty' was widely read and a Land Nationalization Society was formed in Hobart in the mid-eighties.³⁰ It is unlikely that many liberals intended to introduce the full George programme. But he directed attention to the system of land tenure and added teeth to liberal taxation

30. See below, Ch. 4.

policies. The men of the early eighties were concerned with reforms to initiate political democracy. By Federation radicals were pushing policies implying the intervention and controls of the welfare state.

The first move towards liberal political organization was made in October 1884 when a well attended meeting, held in the Hobart Mechanics' Institute, considered means of preventing electoral abuses. A resolution suggesting the establishment of a political reform association was carried unanimously. Manhood suffrage and triennial Parliaments were suggested as added objectives.³¹ No further action was taken till the following March when the Southern Tasmanian Political Reform Association was founded. It was decided to focus attention on electoral reform. A committee set up to investigate the existing electoral system published a report in the middle of March. The Tasmanian News greeted the publication as signifying a "departure from the normal state of things political in Hobart".³²

The Association was active till early in 1887. It had 150 members in April 1885³³ and 190 in the following January.³⁴ The original platform of manhood suffrage,

31. T. N., 14 Oct. 1884.

32. Ibid, 11 March 1885.

33. Ibid, 21 April 1885.

34. Ibid, 19 Jan. 1886.

increased representation and municipal and electoral reform, was expanded, at the close of 1886, to include payment of members and land taxation.³⁵ Leadership came from professional and commercial men. The Committee was headed by Clark, Piesse and Ivey, who had all been members of the Minerva Club. Other prominent members were retailers like G. P. Fitzgerald, W. F. Brownell, A. A. Cane and J. N. Propsting; L. Susman an importer, J. Gellie a building contractor; Taylor the City Librarian; and T. Paton a contracting plasterer. Contact with the Trades and Labour Council was close. Many artisans belonged to both organizations. Hugh Kirk, the secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, was an active member and so too was the young blacksmith Jack Earle, who twenty-five years later became Tasmania's first labour premier.³⁶ The Trades and Labour Council promised the Association "every legitimate support possible",³⁷ and invited delegates to the 1886 Annual Dinner. Association activities were confined to Hobart although some contact was made with the Maratah Labour League. In December 1885 the Tasmanian Natives Association of Launceston corresponded

35. Ibid, 11, 20 Novr. 1885.

36. Reynolds, J., op.cit. p.173.

37. T. N., 8 Novr. 1885.

with the Reform Association, suggesting amalgamation.³⁸
But the Launceston organization collapsed before the link could be forged.

During 1885 the Reform Association waged a campaign for electoral reform. Public meetings were held and Parliament was petitioned.³⁹ Early the following year working class electors, enfranchised under provisions of the 1884 Constitution Act, were enrolled. Meetings were held all over the city and torchlight processions marched through the streets to the music of a brass band.⁴⁰ But the response was disappointing even in Hobart, where "notwithstanding all the beating of drums, the clanging of brass instruments, and the perfervid utterances of stump orators"⁴¹, ⁴² only about 700 were persuaded to add their names to the roll.

In April 1885 the Association nominated W. F. Brownell for a Legislative Council election, but he was defeated.⁴³ At the end of the year the committee drew up a list of

* 39. Ibid, 16 Sept. 1885, 2 May 1885.

40. Ibid, 28, 30 Jan. 1886.

41. M., 2 March 1886.

42. T. N., 23 Feb. 1886.

43. Ibid, 20 April 1885.

x 38. Ibid, 23 Dec. 1885.

questions which was submitted to municipal candidates.⁴⁴

The approach of the 1886 general election roused the Association into action. "Never, perhaps, in the political history of Tasmania", said the Tasmanian News on election eve, "has there been a more critical period than the present".⁴⁵ The Association corresponded with the Trades and Labour Council which agreed to pay half the campaign expenses while reserving the right to bring out its own candidates.⁴⁶ The Association supported Clark in South Hobart, St Hill and Plesse in North Hobart, and Fitzgerald and Gellibrand in West Hobart. Nine candidates clamoured for the liberal vote in the three electorates and only St Hill and Fitzgerald were successful. But as Henry Nicholls had feared, a few "ferocious reformers" had entered Parliament.

Early in 1886 an editorial in the Tasmanian News criticized the apathy of many members of the Association.⁴⁷ By the middle of the following year it was defunct. The Tasmanian News lamented its passing but found consolation in the "spirit and pluck" shown by the Trades and Labour Council.⁴⁸ Municipal Reform Associations were formed in 1887 at West and North Hobart and Battery Point.⁴⁹

44. Ibid, 30 Novr. 1885.

45. Ibid, 12 June 1886.

46. Ibid, 5 Novr. 1886.

47. Ibid, 19 Jan. 1886.

48. Ibid, 9 May 1887.

49. Ibid, 11 Oct. 1887.

Piesse, St Hill, and Fitzgerald were prominent in the new organizations. Piesse was secretary of a Political and Municipal Reform Association formed in November 1890.⁵⁰ It enrolled electors in a house-to-house canvas, but soon collapsed.⁵¹

St Hill and several Hobart M. H. A.'s helped establish an employment agency during the depression.⁵² A number of the middle class liberals flirted with the working class political organizations which sprang up in the nineties. St Hill, Piesse and journalist Ronald Smith joined the Democratic League which was founded in 1896. Liberal politicians D. C. Urquart, Allan McDonald and John Bradley, were also members. Piesse, McDonald and Urquart subsequently became vice-presidents.⁵³ But differences of social background and ideology troubled the affair. Liberals became disenchanted and the dalliance was brief. St Hill resigned from the League in July 1896. His reason, said the Labour Clipper, was that he "appeared to have realized that his school of Democracy (did) not satisfy the leading spirits of the new organization."⁵⁴

50. L. E., 4 Novr. 1890.

51. D. T., 5 Novr. 1890.

52. T. N., 3, 10 June 1893.

53. Cl., 1 Aug. 1896.

54. Ibid, 4 July 1896.

In the middle of 1897 the inaugural meeting of the Tasmanian Reform League was held in Hobart. A platform adopted by the meeting included adult suffrage, reform of the Legislative Council, loans to farmers and repurchase of large estates, old age pensions and compulsory early closing. Leadership came from liberal politicians and professional and commercial men. Among fifty odd present at the inaugural meeting were Piesse, St Hill, Edward Mulcahy and John Bradley, M. H. A.'s for Hobart, and W. J. McWilliams the member for Ringarooma.⁵⁵ In his presidential address Piesse said that while members of the League cherished the cause of democracy and the promotion of political progress, they were opposed to a democracy "which should be the means of one portion of the people lately come to power repeating the errors of the past and establishing for itself some special privileges, even though it might attempt to justify itself as merely taking revenge for previous oppression".⁵⁶

The League existed for about a year. Debates were held on income taxes, free education, adult suffrage and the Hare system. Deputations urged adult suffrage on the Ministry in September 1897 and April 1898.⁵⁷ Late in 1897

55. T. N., 18 June 1897.

56. Ibid, 20 July 1897.

57. Ibid, 14 Sept, 1897, 14 April, 1898.

a room was opened in the city to enroll voters.⁵⁸ But the League failed to flourish. It lacked the life blood of popular support. The working class movement, growing in confidence and self-consciousness, was detaching itself from middle class liberalism. A liberal attempt to negotiate an alliance with the Democratic League was rebuffed.⁵⁹ The labour papers were captious and unrelenting critics of the Reform League. The liberals' democracy, said the Tasmanian Democrat, was "of a kind measured and fitted to the classes, and advocated partly from motives of self protection and partly to lull the masses into a false sense of security".⁶⁰

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58. Ibid, 16 Novr. 1897.

59. T. D., 11 June 1897.

60. Ibid.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF POLITICS.

Political practice was in transition during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Before 1880 Parliament was dominated by factions based on personal followings and traditional loyalties. The shifting pattern of alliances determined the fate of Ministries. Principle played a subordinate role. The passing of the first generation of politicians and the formation of the coalition government dispersed the old factions. Politics were stabilized but the power of criticism was temporarily weakened. The contemporaneous upsurge of liberalism encouraged the formation of new groupings. Till the twentieth century development was slow, but after Federation polarization of interest and ideal was rapid as politics congealed in the pattern of the modern party system.

Cross currents of individualism, localism and tradition inhibited the development of organized parties in the eighties and nineties. Politicians wished to be representatives rather than delegates. They were wedded to the ideal of independence from control by party or electorate. A large number of independents in every Parliament refused consistent support to either government or

opposition, and voted for what they thought the best interests of the country. In the small Tasmanian electorates issues were parochial and contests were fought on personal grounds. The electorates gave "an individuality to the voters which (made) them timid, and transferred the question from the region of principle to that of personality".⁶¹ Localism was always strong in the colony. From the beginning settlement had spread out from two centres. Hobart and Launceston were traditional rivals. The development of North-West farmlands and Western mine-fields complicated the pattern. No ministry could be formed without concession to sectional jealousies. Regional loyalties often determined voting in Parliament.

Until the rise of the Labour Party after 1900 politicians were men of substance and social position. Payment of members was not adopted till 1890. No working man sat in the Legislature until 1903. Landed, professional and commercial groups dominated political life. Social uniformity fostered similarity of outlook and muted differences of political opinion. Between 1861 and 1900 roughly 40 per cent of all members of Parliament and 75 per cent of all Cabinet Ministers belonged to the Tasmanian Club.⁶²

61. T. N., 10 March 1885.

62. Calculated from lists prepared by the Tasmanian Working Party of the Australian Dictionary of National Biography.

As in other Australian colonies, the large public works expenditure of the prosperous eighties led to a concentration of parliamentary time on administration. There was not sufficient social and political legislation to produce "consistent political divisions".⁶³ Many successful candidates had scarcely a shadow of political philosophy, but promised public works for their district. The roads and bridges member was the "poorest material for party action".⁶⁴ Ministers controlled the allocation of public works which became an established price for political support. The railway building schemes of the eighties clearly bore the imprint of political pressure. The Sorell and Apsley lines were never financial propositions. In August 1887 the Launceston Examiner condemned current methods of securing majorities. It instanced the action of R. J. Lucas, the member for Kingborough, who announced his "determination to secede" from Ministerial ranks unless "the wants of his district were more fully considered". The Minister of Lands introduced a supplementary scheme of public works in which Kingborough "took the lion's share".⁶⁵

63. Martin, A. W., 'Political Groupings in N. S. W., 1872-1889,' p. 10.

64. Ibid, p. 11.

65. 8 Aug. 1887.

Liberalism added a new thread to the traditional pattern of political practice, rather than radically altering the pattern itself. No liberal party developed before the turn of the century. A solid core of politicians gave consistent support to traditional liberal measures. A small group of conservatives always opposed them. A larger body of independents, moving at will between the two entrenched forces, held the balance of power. In 1885, W. A. Guesdon, the liberal member for Central Hobart, said:

There were very few men, you could count them on your finger ends, who were of consistent liberal opinion. Look for example at the hon. member for Deloraine (who) apposed a liberal proposal like manhood suffrage, but had suddenly jumped to the front with a proposal like payment of members ... They would find the same sort of thing on both sides of the House.

66

The Assembly division lists of the eighties and nineties reveal the inconsistencies. They also reveal a pattern of electoral behaviour. In the early eighties the two cities usually returned conservative professional and commercial men. Conditions changed after the constitutional and electoral reforms of 1884-5 and Hobart became a liberal stronghold. Men like Clark, St Hill and Fitzgerald, returned in 1886-7, were far in advance of most of their colleagues. During the nineties, with the election of John Bradley, Edward Mulcahy,

C. D. Hoggins, R. C. Propsting and Herbert Nicholls, the trend was consolidated. The pressure of a large self-conscious working class prevented any backsliding. Throughout the period the Hobart liberals led the popular cause and provided the ideas and initiative for the radical wing of the House. During the eighties Launceston was politically inert in comparison with the capital. Members were conservative, only H. E. Lette providing a leavening of liberalism. After the depression of the early nineties the mood changed. Liberal and working class political organizations roused the electorate and radicals like Ronald Smith, Allan McDonald and M. J. Clarke went south to Parliament.

The old rural districts were predominantly conservative. However W. H. T. Brown and A. T. Fillinger, who represented Campbell Town and Oatlands throughout the period, often sided with the liberals. Members were frequently large landowners. Some, like H. R. Dumeresq, John Lyne, Frank Archer and Donald Cameron, belonged to the colony's most prominent landed families. Conservative Hobart politicians like Henry Dobson and M. E. Lewis found a security in Brighton and Richmond they would never have obtained in the city electorates.

The small farming districts of the North West Coast, the North East and the Huon leaned towards liberalism. Members frequently provided valuable support for the city members in struggles against the conservatives of the old rural districts. There were exceptions. C. J. McKenzie, one of the most conservative M. H. A.'s, represented Wellington throughout the period. But during the eighties the North-Western members Edward Braddon, J. M. Dooley and C. B. M. Fenton frequently voted for liberal legislation. Even in the nineties when there was a mild trend to conservatism these districts returned men in advance of their colleagues from the older districts. B. S. Bird represented Franklin throughout the period. He was a staunch liberal, but by 1900 had been left stranded by the advancing wave of radicalism. Ringarooma, a small-farming and mining electorate created in 1885, was represented during the nineties by W. J. McWilliams one of the Assembly's most radical members. Separate representation was given to the West Coast following the rapid development of Zeehan and Queenstown in the nineties. D. C. Urquart and J. J. Gaffney, the two West Coast members before 1900, were consistently liberal.

Parliament inched its way towards democracy. The radical wing of the Assembly, strengthened in the nineties,

became increasingly impatient with conservative resistance. Differences both in and between the Houses were sharpened. Polarization was accelerating. The number of divisions forced in the Assembly rose significantly between 1880 and 1900. The average annual number in the seventh Parliament (1877-81) was 22. It rose to 27 in the eighth Parliament (1882-85), 50 in the ninth Parliament (1886-90), 101 in the tenth Parliament (1891-93), and 106 in the eleventh Parliament (1894-96).⁶⁷ In 1884 Giblin attempted a mild reform of the Council. To allow greater expression of public opinion without destroying the continuity of the Chamber, he proposed that four members should retire every year. In 1896 the Assembly accepted the principle of the Referendum. By the end of the decade radical M. H. A.'s were demanding the abolition of the Council.

During a convivial Federal Council banquet in February 1885, Premier Adye Douglas said Tasmanian Ministries were different from those of other countries. They "seemed to have very much of their own way in relation to public matters".⁶⁸

67. Calculated from H.A.J., 1877-83 and J. and P. of P., 1884-1896.

68. T. N., 8 Feb. 1885.

Many electorates were apathetic. Thomas Reibey addressed his constituents at Westbury in July 1885. The Warden of the municipality said it was the first time a meeting had ever been called to enable electors to meet their member.⁶⁹ A year later M. Brown held a meeting at Ross. He said it was the first for fifteen years.⁷⁰ But Douglas was describing conditions that were fleeting. Liberal criticism and political organisations were fanning discontent. Public opinion was beginning to exert unprecedented pressure on Ministerial policies.

Many liberals accepted the coalition when it was formed in 1879. By 1884 it was generally condemned. The editor of the Tasmanian News believed it diffused a benumbing, freezing and evil influence on political life.⁷¹ During numerous reconstructions the Ministry recruited a number of its most capable critics. The power to displace the government was weakened. But it gradually lost its grip. A Royal Commission of 1886 condemned waste and inefficiency in the Public Works Department. A want of confidence motion was defeated, but many government

69. M., 4 July 1885.

70. D. T., 22 July 1886.

71. 7 Feb. 1884.

supporters criticized the department. The handling of appointments caused concern. J. B. Walker, prominent Quaker and lawyer, found politics growing "more and more disgusting". "The Ministry", he wrote, "... almost despise the pretence of the public good and calmly provide for themselves with a cynical disregard for men's opinions or their own fitness that is almost heroic in its coolness."⁷²

The Liberals desired the development of a strong Opposition. The struggle of two groups, firmly founded on principle, would, they believed, purify and invigorate the political atmosphere. Henry Nicholls claimed the raw materials for conservative and liberal parties did not exist in the colony. He concluded that party government was a useless aping of English convention, "a piece of arrant humbug and tomfoolery" which would impair the usefulness of the Legislature.⁷³ During 1882 an official Opposition was established for the first time since 1879, but it offered little real challenge to the government.⁷⁴

The General Election of 1886 incited liberal activity. In June a conference of Liberals was held in the Federal Hall in Murray Street to select candidates for the Hobart

⁷². { Diary of J. B. Walker.
7 Feb. 1884.

⁷³. M., 30 March 1887, 23 Aug. 1886.

⁷⁴. Ibid, 2 Jan. 1883.

seats. Opposition members, Pillinger, Dooley, Bird and Braddon mingled with Gill, the owner of the Tasmanian News, Kirk the Trades and Labour Council Secretary, and prominent Reform Association members. Motions passed expressed opposition to the government and urged liberals not to oppose each other. A standing committee was appointed to secure "a full and fair representation of the Liberal Party".⁷⁵

On the evening before the formal opening of Parliament a meeting of the Opposition was held in Currie's Hotel in Murray Street.⁷⁶ Several prominent members acted with "a commendable spirit by sinking personal considerations in their desire for a properly organized party".⁷⁷ Braddon was elected leader. It was a composite group, but all were more liberal than members of the Ministry. Fitzgerald and St Hill, the newly elected "fiery democrats" provided a tincture of radicalism. The following day the Agnew government faced the strongest and most cohesive opposition seen in the House for seven years.

At a cabinet meeting in January 1887 the J. W. Agnew government (1886-7) decided to send Attorney General

75. T. N., 12 June 1886.

76. Ibid, 24 Aug. 1886.

77. M., 6 Decr. 1886.

J. S. Dodds to the Imperial Conference in London.⁷⁸

Lucas, the lawyer member for Kingborough, was chosen as his successor. Constitutional practice demanded that Lucas return to his constituents for approval. But his seat was unsafe, he had only just beaten Gill in 1886. The government faced two crucial elections. Gill stood against Lucas and Clark nominated for the South Hobart seat vacated by Dodds. As the elections approached the pulse of political life speeded. All groups sensed their importance. Conservatives feared a swing to the Opposition would destroy the government and breach the dykes of resistance. The Tasmanian News believed the elections would inaugurate a new era for the colony and strike a "decisive blow at monopoly cliquism and old fogeyism",⁷⁹

Clark opened a spirited liberal campaign with a serious and enthusiastic address at the Town Hall. Braddon, Bird, Fitzgerald, and Kirk spoke in his support.⁸⁰ Members of the Reform Association were active in the campaign. The Trades and Labour Council urged all working men to support Clark because he had "consistently identified himself with the cause of the working classes". The

78. L. E., 2 Jan'y. 1888.

79. 4 March 1887.

80. T. N., 24 Feb. . 1887.

Secretary wrote to all unionists in the district.⁸¹

Clark romped home ahead of his one opponent. The Mercury thought he might do something to serve the colony if he kept out of the "vicious circle" which had supported him.⁸²

The Kingborough electi-on nine days later roused even greater interest. At Campbell Town it caused "no little excitement".⁸³ Waratah miners hoped for Gill's return.⁸⁴

Gill embarked on an extensive tour of the district. To the Mercury's disgust Opposition members took a prominent part in the campaign. Such tactics, it claimed, were lacking in all propriety and would not be countenanced by honourable and prudent politicians.⁸⁵

Gill scored a narrow victory. A group of delighted liberals celebrated at Tattersall's Hotel. Government supporters were unable to reconstruct the Ministry. On March 29 a new government took office, with Fysh as Premier and Chief Secretary, Clark as Attorney General, Bird as Treasurer and Braddon as Minister of Lands. G. P. Fitzgerald became Minister without portfolio in October 1888. The same

81. Ibid, 3 March 1887.

82. M., 1 March 1887.

83. Campbell Town correspondent in T. N., 23 March 1887.

84. Waratah correspondent in T. N., 18 March 1887.

85. 15 March 1887.

year Braddon went to England as Agent General and was replaced by A. T. Fillingim. It was one of the most capable Ministries in the history of the colony.

Members had a wide diversity of background and experience.

Phillip Oakley Fysh, born in London, had arrived in Tasmania in 1859 and established himself as a merchant. Despite depression he prospered, becoming one of the leading wholesale traders in the South. He entered the Legislative Council in 1866 and sat till 1873 when he was elected for the Assembly seat of East Hobart. He was Treasurer in the Kennerly Ministry in 1873 and leader of his own short-lived administration in 1877. He returned to England in the late seventies. On returning he successfully contested the Council seat for Buckingham. Bolton Stafford Bird was born in Northumbria in 1840 and arrived in Victoria during the Gold Rush. In 1865 he became a Wesleyan minister, but subsequently joined the Congregational Church. Retiring in 1879 after five years at the Davey Street Congregational Church in Hobart, he began orcharding in the Huon. He was elected member for Franklin in 1882. Edward Nicholas Coventry Braddon was born in Cornwall in 1828. At the age of eighteen he joined the staff of a merchant firm in Calcutta. During the Mutiny he raised, trained, and

led a regiment of native troops and was frequently mentioned in dispatches. He became Commissioner for Stamps and Excise in Oudh where he indulged his passion for hunting. He described his wide sporting experience in the racily written Thirty Years of Shikah. Retiring in 1878 he settled at Leith on the North West Coast. A year later he entered the Assembly as member for West Devon. Alfred Thomas Pilbinger was born at Oatlands in 1839 and was educated at Horton College, Ross. Leaving school he began farming, eventually owning 15,000 acres. After a period in municipal politics he was returned to the Assembly for Oatlands. George Parker Fitzgerald was born in Hobart in 1843 and educated at Hutchins School. At nineteen he went to Sydney and began his career in a merchant house. Returning to Hobart in 1882 he became local agent, and later partner, in a Sydney wholesale firm.⁸⁶

Clark and Fitzgerald were the radicals of the Cabinet. Clark planned the reform programmes which the government attempted to implement. Fysh found him difficult at times because he "was always wanting to reform society from top to bottom".⁸⁷ Fysh had been regarded as a conservative

86. Biographical details from: Reynolds, J., op.cit., Cyclopaedia of Tasmania, and obituaries in local papers.

87. Reynolds, J., op.cit., p.173.

during the sixties and seventies. But shortly after returning from Europe he informed a public meeting in Hobart that he was "in advance of his former self" and advocated manhood suffrage. When accused of insincerity he replied that he had been "liberal to the backbone before (he) left England but coming to a country with peculiar institutions (he) did not advocate (his) opinion".⁸⁸ Braddon and Pillinger provided the conservative counter-weight to Clark's reforming zeal. In a speech to the Waratah Reform League in 1885, Braddon described himself as an 'ultra-liberal'. He advocated land tax, free trade and electoral reform, but opposed manhood suffrage, payment of members and "ideas of delegation".⁸⁹ J. B. Walker regarded him a "Tory by temperament and conviction".⁹⁰ It is perhaps strange that Braddon chose to mix with the liberals. But he was an administrator, more concerned with efficient government than political philosophy. An outsider, he had few connexions and little sympathy with the established Tasmanian families. He represented West Devon, a small selectors' electorate, and his sincere concern with their welfare lured him towards advanced legislation.

88. T. N., 26 June 1884.

89. Ibid, 22 May 1885.

90. Diary of J. B. Walker, 11 Aug. 1884.

In May 1885 the Tasmanian News predicted that a Ministry which studied "the welfare of the people as a whole", would have a long lease of power.⁹¹ The Fysh government showed more concern with the "welfare of the people" than had any of its predecessors, and remained in power for a record term of five and a half years. Widely known as the 'Peoples Ministry', the government maintained close connexions with the working class movement. The night after the Governor signed in the new administration, Clark, Braddon and Fitzgerald attended the anniversary dinner of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.⁹²

Ministers regularly attended the annual dinners of the Trades and Labour Council and became patrons of the Eight Hour Demonstration Committee and the Debating Society. At the 1888 dinner Clark proudly referred to the fact that he had a more personal connexion with the council than had any other politician.⁹³

Conservatives deprecated the liason. J. B. Walker was disgusted with Fysh's "subservience" to the Council and

91. 12 May 1885.

92. T.N., 29 Mar. 1887.

93. Ibid., 29 May 1888.

his patronage of Secretary Kirk.⁹⁴ A correspondent in the Daily Telegraph complained that the unionists were the "chosen guides, philosophers and friends" of the government.⁹⁵ An editorial in the same paper said Clark had identified himself with a group whose demonstrations were offensive to good taste and the best interests of society.⁹⁶ Fitzgerald, said the Mercury, was mixed up with a "Falstaffian crew".⁹⁷

The government survived the 1891 election. But it ran into frequent squalls of criticism. Ministers clung tenaciously to the raft of office despite the fact that their scheme of direct taxation was rejected three years in succession. Gill's Tasmanian News deserted, described Bird as the "most conspicuous parliamentary failure of the last decade"⁹⁸ and attempted to torpedo the government. The economic tempests of the early nineties finally sank the Ministry. It was defeated on the floor of the House and resigned on August 17, 1892.

94. Diary of J. B. Walker, 12 Aug. 1892.

95. 22 Aug. 1890.

96. 29 Aug. 1887.

97. 24 July 1886.

98. 3 Jan. 1890.

The leader of the new government was Henry Dobson, whom Clark described as "a plutocrat who believes in the division of Society into 'upper', 'middle', and 'lower' classes on a basis of property and money".⁹⁹ The Ministry was conservative, although Treasurer John Henry provided a leaven of liberalism. Finance occupied almost the whole attention of a harassed Parliament. The government floundered as the colony sank deeper into the mire of depression. Defeat came in 1894. Liberal and Opposition members met in Caucus and elected Braddon who had recently returned from England. He defeated Clark by one vote.¹⁰⁰ Fysh became Treasurer, Pillinger returned to the Public Works portfolio and Clark resumed office as Attorney General. William Moore, member for the North-Western Council seat of Russell, accepted the post of Chief Secretary. Finance was the biggest task facing the new government. Braddon, "the stony hearted Premier",¹⁰¹ proved admirably suited to the task. With the instincts of the true hunter he stalked waste and inefficiency through every thicket of the Public Service. Clark urged the Ministry to further reform.

99. Reynolds, J., op.cit. p.181.

100. Ibid, p. 192.

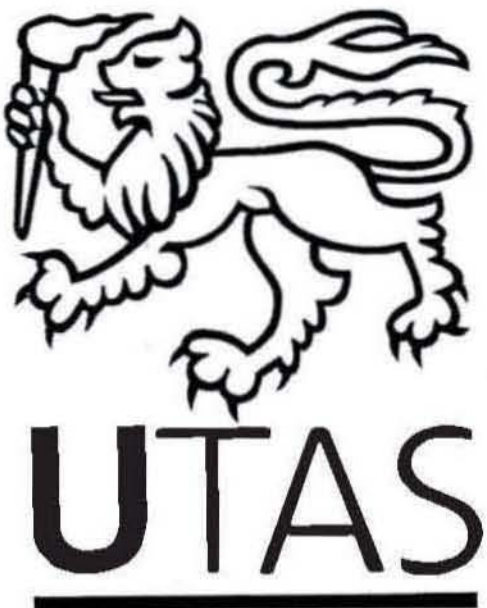
101. M., 10 Oct. 1895.

Braddon was a skilful leader and held a majority together longer than any Premier in the history of the colony. Some of his followers, said the Mercury, "reminded one of a tableau of marionettes, the Premier pulling the strings and the figures moving".¹⁰² But he gradually lost his lieutenants. Clark resigned in October 1897 over the Premier's handling of railway concessions. Fysh went to England as Agent General in 1899. Pillinger died later in the year. His successor, Captain E. T. Miles resigned a few months later after a scandal over contracts of the Strahan Marine Board. The Ministry succumbed to this final shock and fell in October.

The new government led by N. E. Lewis steered the colony into Federation. Fysh, Braddon and Piesse entered the Commonwealth Parliament. But many Liberals of the eighties had passed out of political life. Clark was on the bench, Gill had sold his paper and was living in England, St Hill had retired into private life. Others had lapsed into conservatism. Their generation had been superseded by younger and more radical men. Liberalism itself was being jettisoned by the ascendant working class

102. M., 23 Novr. 1896.

movement. But manhood suffrage, payment of members, triennial Parliaments and proportional representation, those four main planks of the old Reform Association had been accepted. The men of the eighties who trudged the path of reform had fulfilled their mission.



THE FRUITS OF REFORM.

Professor Manning Clark has written that two bites were made at political democracy and social reform in Australia between 1850 and 1900. The first, from 1856 to 1865, produced manhood suffrage, the secret ballot, the eight-hour day and land reform. The second, from 1880 to 1900, "touched the core" of political privilege and "forced men of property to accept the idea that all should enjoy a measure of material well-being". Plural voting was abolished, payment of members and women's suffrage accepted. Graduated income and land taxes, old age pensions and factory Acts were "the price the new democracy exacted from the old order".¹ The first period in Tasmania produced only a nibble at democracy. Conservative legislators were but little tempted by the fruits of reform. But in the last two decades of the century the processes of change speeded. After a generation in a narrow and stagnant backwater the colony swung quickly into the broad stream of modern Australian life.

1. Clark, C. M. H. (ed.), Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900, p. XII.

CONSTITUTIONAL.

In July 1884, 16,500 of the colony's 34,000 adult males had the franchise.² The percentage of voters was not significantly higher than thirty years earlier. The Constitution Act of 1870 did little more than restore the vote to those who had lost it during long years of depression. Wage earner qualification was dropped from £100 ~~per year~~ to £30 ~~per year~~. But the £30 ~~per year~~ had to be received in the form of a monthly paid salary. The employee paid by the week or fortnight was deftly excluded. Many urban workers qualified as householders but the great mass of rural labourers and miners were voteless. Property owners and tenants were automatically included on the voting rolls. Wage earners had to register annually. Political rights petered out on the more prosperous fringes of the working class.

It was widely known, early in 1884, that the government intended to reform the Constitution when Parliament met later in the year. A mingling of hope and apprehension agitated public life. On a summer evening in February seventy or eighty men gathered at Waratah to form a Labour League.³

2. Speech by the Premier (W. R. Giblin) introducing second Reading of Constitution Bill, M., 10 July 1884.

3. T. N., 22 Feb. 1884.

An earnest audience was told that while the spirit of the age was progressive government policies were retrogressive. Manhood suffrage was adopted as the first plank in the League's platform. Four days before the opening of Parliament the infant Trades and Labour Council held its first public meeting. Manhood suffrage was urged on the Ministry. The night before the opening of the new session a second meeting gathered.⁴ The editor of the Tasmanian News felt that his words had not been in vain, "that a great awakening (had) taken place, and a healthy public opinion (was) in the process of formation".⁵

Premier Giblin explained the provisions of his Constitution Bill while introducing its first reading. The qualification for the Council was to be lowered from thirty pounds to twenty pounds for property owners and from ~~£200~~ hundred pounds to ~~one hundred~~ ^{£100} pounds for tenants. The Assembly franchise was to extend to all owners and leaseholders of property irrespective of its value and to employees receiving ~~eighty pounds~~ ^{£80} a year providing they had been continuously employed for six months. Giblin estimated that the Assembly rolls would be increased by about 10,000

4. Ibid, 28 June 1884.

5. Ibid, 1 July 1884.

or roughly 60 per cent. The number of Council electors he expected to rise from 3,400 to 5,000.⁶

A meeting of the Trades and Labour Council the following night expressed its dissatisfaction with the Bill and suggested the formation of a Labour League.⁷ A public meeting called a week later demanded manhood suffrage.⁸ At the end of the month a group of liberal professional and commercial men convened a public meeting. Andrew Inglis Clark moved in favour of manhood suffrage.⁹ A Liberal Association, formed in Hobart at the end of July adopted manhood suffrage and income tax as its prime objectives.¹⁰ Literary and Debating Societies at Launceston and Latrobe discussed the Bill.¹¹ Giblin told a Trades and Labour Council deputation that demands for further reform were endemic to Hobart and Hobart was not the colony. The Council promised to carry its agitation throughout the island. Meetings held at Launceston and New Norfolk were only moderately successful. The Tasmanian News' northern correspondent said the Council-inspired meeting

6. M., 11 July 1884.

7. T. N., 12 July 1884.

8. Ibid, 19 July 1884.

9. Ibid, 22 July 1884.

10. Ibid, 31 July 1884.

11. Ibid, 26 July 1884.

was "too essentially and completely of the working class element to command ultimate success".¹² Further meetings planned for Oatlands, Glenorchy and New Town were apparently never held. Petitions were sent to Parliament from the North Eastern tin mines, from New Norfolk, Campbell Town, Richmond and Jerusalem.¹³ At Beaconsfield a meeting of 200 gathered to the accompaniment of the local brass band.¹⁴ The Waratah Labour League organized meetings and petitioned Parliament.¹⁵ There had not been commensurate agitation for purely political reform since 1856. But Giblin was right. Most of the Colony was indifferent, While the fate of the Bill was still undecided, Nicholas Brown met his constituents at Hamilton. Only one question was asked and that about "the steep incline of Webberley's Hill!"¹⁶

The Bill was favourably accepted in the House of Assembly. Most members agreed that some reform was desirable. Giblin said the new provisions would mean that men would have to rise to reach the vote rather than stoop to pick it up. He considered he was giving the vote to all who deserved it.¹⁷

12. Ibid, 12 Aug. 1884.

13. Ibid, 7 Aug. 1884; 9 Aug. 1884.

14. Ibid, 8 Aug. 1884.

15. Ibid, 13 Aug. 1884; M., 10 July 1884.

16. T. N., 22 Aug. 1884.

17. M., 10 July 1884.

"Everybody who (was) anybody", said Mercury editor Nicholls, thought the extension judicious. Those left out were of a class who would not be any great loss to the community.¹⁸

Emphasis was placed on the need to restrict the vote to those employed continuously for six months. J. B. Walker, a close friend of Giblin, wrote a hurried note in his diary after talking with the Premier - "Safeguards in Bill - six months contin. employment. Manhood suff. pecul. dangerous here - a few good mines bring over some thousand of miners - nomads".¹⁹

William Guesdon, member for Central Hobart, called for a division on manhood suffrage. His motion was defeated by twenty six votes to one.²⁰ John Lyne of Glamorgan said he would rather go to the stake than support it.²¹ Members believed the extreme of manhood suffrage would upset the balance of the Constitution and override the interests of property. But agitation had had some affect. Audley Coote, member for George Town, said in the Assembly that the government's provisions were great concessions and he would not consider lowering the franchise further. Two days later a Beaconsfield meeting favoured manhood suffrage. Coote

18. Ibid, 11 July 1884.

19. Diary of J. B. Walker, 3 Aug. 1884.

20. M., 18 July 1884.

21. Ibid, 31 July 1884.

telegraphed the conveners of the meeting twenty-four hours after saying he would be only too pleased to do all he could to meet their wishes.²² The Opposition urged further reductions and the Assembly lowered the wage-earner qualifications to sixty pounds with allowances for food and lodging received in lieu of wages.²³ Opposition leader Alfred Dobson injected a motion into the Bill to hold all elections on one day. Several decades of ministerial manipulation were terminated.²⁴ In the past governments had carefully staggered elections to facilitate the return of supporters. J. B. Walker met Dobson socially, "gave him a bit of (his) mind" and accused him of pandering to popular prejudices. Dobson "seemed a good deal put out", and said his sole desire was to "reach a logical standing ground which would enable them to rest and resist manhood suffrage at any rate for some years".²⁵

For many the passage of the Bill marked the opening of an era. The editor of the Tasmanian News believed that if the new voting power was used correctly, electors would "weed out from their Legislative Council and House of Assembly, the drones and self seekers" and elect a Parliament that would

22. T. N., 8 Aug. 1884.

23. M., 1 Sept. 1884.

24. T. N., 6 Novr. 1884.

25. Diary of J. B. Walker, 11 Aug. 1884 ,

"banish all the degrading associations of the past and make
 Tasmania, what it ought to be, the gem of the Southern Seas..."²⁶
 As the 1886 general elections approached conservative
 apprehension mounted. Henry Nicholls feared it might 'make
 a revolution'.²⁷ But polling proceeded quietly and when the
 figures went up there were few surprises. Apart from a couple
 of advanced liberals returned from Hobart, the composition of
 the new House was little different from preceeding ones. It
 is difficult to determine the exact number of electors added
 to the rolls as a consequence of the new provisions. There
 were just over 25,000 voters in 1886, representing an increase
 of 8,5000 since 1884.²⁸ Between 1881 and 1891 the percentage
 of voters to adult males rose from 52 per cent to 76 per cent.²⁹
 The increase was smallest in the urban areas and most sig-
 nificant in the small farming and mining districts. The
 community was content with the new franchise. Agitation for
 extension was not renewed till the nineties. The Trades and
 Labour Council resolved in favour of manhood suffrage in 1887.³⁰
 But most skilled workmen had the vote and the Council's demand

26. T. N., 20 Novr. 1884.

27. M., 12 Jan. 1886.

28. S. of T., 1886.

29. Ibid, 1881 and 1891.

30. T. N., 8 Sept. 1887.

lacked the urgency of 1884. Its first annual report stated that manhood suffrage had been obtained in "everything but the mere word".³¹

By 1894 depression had taken many working class votes and was multiplying demands for radical reform. In September a Labour Electoral League deputation asked Attorney General Clark to introduce manhood suffrage.³² Clark regretted that immediate action was impossible but promised reform at the earliest opportunity. His Constitution Act amendment of the following year proposed a reduction of twenty pounds in the wage earner qualification for the Assembly. For the Council freehold qualification was to be lowered from ~~£20~~ ^{£15} to ~~fifteen pounds~~ and leasehold from ~~£80~~ ^{£60} to ~~sixty pounds~~. The proposals, Clark said, were not revolutionary, but intended to readmit those who had lost their vote due to reduction of wages and property values. In 1896 Clark told a Democratic League deputation that "he was in accord with adult suffrage and would do his best to support the amendment in committee, but as the Cabinet were not of one mind it had not been inserted in the Bill..."³³ As happened frequently during

31. Ibid, 10 Jan. 1885.

32. C1, 24 Oct. 1894.

33. Ibid, 22 Aug. 1896.

the next few years, Clark introduced the Bill and then encouraged more liberal amendments from the radical wing of the House. In committee he moved for discussion of adult suffrage. It passed by twenty-two votes to five. Premier Braddon was surprised. "A change", he said, "had seemed to come over the spirit of the House. They were dealing with a proposal which ten years (before) would have been scouted and ridiculed".³⁴ A few days later Mulcahy's amendment to inject adult suffrage into the Bill was defeated by seventeen³⁵ votes to twelve. When it finally reached the Council the Bill enfranchised every person, irrespective of sex, who received wages amounting to forty pounds or who was provided with board, residence, clothing and other necessities of the same value. But Clark's 'democratic friends' had pushed far beyond the acceptance of the conservative Chamber. Chief Secretary Moore gave the Bill a half-hearted launching into a sea of criticism. H. Rooke described it as the "greatest piece of absurdity" that had ever come before the Council and it was promptly shelved. As the conservative politicians of 1884 had hoped, their legislation ushered in a period of

34. M., 2 Aug. 1895.

35. Ibid, 7 Aug. 1895.

of rest and manhood suffrage was resisted until the first year of the new century.³⁶

Giblin had attempted to enfranchise women property-owners in 1884. But the proposal was too novel to gain adherents and was laughed out of Committee. There had been no popular demand for female suffrage and the issue lay dormant till the mid-nineties. The attempt to introduce universal suffrage in 1895 kindled the first flicker of public concern. The following year the Women's Christian Temperance Union held its fourth Annual Convention in Hobart. With branches in the capital, Launceston and fourteen country centres, it was probably the largest, and certainly the most militant, women's organization in the colony. In her Presidential address Mrs. Blair alluded to the rejection of the Constitution Act amendment in 1895 and deplored the ignorance and prejudice opposed to female suffrage. She scorned women, who living for themselves, "were satisfied to go down to their graves without having made a single creature better or happier outside the narrow circle they call(ed)'home' ". Male opposition forced her to the conclusion that men were afraid that women would make "the world too good for them to live in".³⁷ In July members of

36. Ibid, 10 Aug. 1895.

37. Ibid, 25, 28 March 1896.

the Union debated universal suffrage with the Chalmer's Literary Society before an audience of 200 'ladies and gentlemen'.³⁸ Further meetings were held in August and September and seventeen petitions favouring adult suffrage were presented to Parliament from all over the colony.³⁹

Clark introduced another Bill to amend the constitution at the end of August. Its provisions were identical to those proposed by the government a year previously. McWilliams moved for female suffrage which was accepted by nineteen votes to seven.⁴⁰ The Council agreed to the original government proposals, slightly lowered its own franchise, but peremptorily rejected the clause adopting female suffrage. G. H. Grant said women would be swayed by clerical influences; H. Rooke claimed the vote would destroy men's chivalrous feeling towards the fair sex and would be the "worst thing that could happen to women, pure women".⁴¹

The Braddon government made its last attempt at reform in 1899. Urquart, Clark's successor as Attorney

38. T.N., 17 July 1896.

39. J. & P. of P., XXXIV, 1896.

40. M., 28 Aug. 1896.

41. Ibid, 24 Sept. 1896.

General, introduced an amending Bill early in July. It aimed to introduce manhood suffrage for the Assembly and lower the Council franchise to embrace all householders. McWilliams again moved a successful motion for adult suffrage. Henry Dobson complained that the House was crippling the Constitution and leaving the colony to the tyranny of the "unthinking majority".⁴² But the Council stood impervious to reform and the Bill was rejected. It was bound, said the Mercury, to respect public opinion under certain conditions, but not to accept "a craze of a majority in the Assembly, even though that craze finds expression session after session".⁴³ An Assembly Committee attempted to resolve the dead-lock. In the Upper Chamber William Moore tried to re-introduce the Bill but the Chairman ruled the action unconstitutional. Donald Cameron moved for the dissolution of the Assembly but his motion was negatived by a large majority. The nearness of Federation dissuaded members from forcing a Constitutional crisis.⁴⁴

Federation imposed manhood suffrage on the Tasmanian Parliament. Conservative politicians saw that union made it inevitable. Lewis, one of the Assembly's most

42. Ibid, 6 July 1899.

43. Ibid, 7 July 1899.

44. Ibid, 9 Sept. 1899.

conservative members since the mid-eighties, introduced the Bill on the last day of July 1900. It was accepted without division.⁴⁵ Opposition was confined to a few die-hards. Old Daniel Burke, who many years before had helped the Irish exile John Mitchel escape from the island, rose undaunted, "beneath the eyes of God and one seedy person in the Strangers' Gallery" to denounce the Bill. His arguments, said the Clipper, were as "futile as the penitence of a hopeless dipso".⁴⁶ In Committee Bradley attempted to introduce adult suffrage and Braddon moved to further reduce the Council qualifications. Fearing Council intransigence members rejected both proposals.⁴⁷ In the Upper Chamber, W. A. B. Gellibrand, the landowning member for Derwent, expressed conservative fears of the West Coast miners. But the Council accepted the Bill. The final skirmish was won with an ease that must have surprised the liberals who, in the early eighties, fired the first shots in the battle for the franchise.

During the eighties payment of members was advocated by the Tasmanian News, the Reform Association and the Hobart

45. Ibid, 1 Aug. 1900.

46. Cl., 4 Aug. 1900.

47. M., 1 Aug. 1900, 2 Aug. 1900.

Trades and Labour Council. In August 1885, Rooke, the member for Deloraine, moved a motion urging its introduction. It was carried into committee on the Speaker's casting vote,⁴⁸ but Rooke, finding support evaporating, withdrew it a month later.⁴⁹ Most members agreed with Lucas, who said payment would destroy members' independence and introduce into parliament an undesirable class of politicians.⁵⁰ Similar motions were introduced in each of the three following years by Fitzgerald, Dooley and Fenton. All were rejected, but support progressively increased. After the narrow defeat of Fenton's motion in 1889, Henry Nicholls concluded that payment of members would eventually come. "It is one of those things which seem to be inevitable," he wrote, "like childish diseases, which every community is bound to have ...". Honorary service, he lamented, would disappear with the development of a system which was "fast levelling down, and which ultimately (would) reduce all things to a theoretical dead level".⁵¹

Fenton re-introduced the motion in the following year. It passed by seventeen votes to eleven. The Fysh government prepared a Bill to capitalize on the favourable motion. The

48. Ibid, 29 Aug. 1885.

49. Ibid, 18 Sept. 1885.

50. Ibid, 29 Aug. 1885.

51. Ibid, 23 Aug. 1889.

Assembly accepted it after a short debate. But on reaching the Council it met determined resistance led by old Adye Douglas who had promised to fight until the bitterend. Amendments made on every clause were pressed to divisions. The House sat on till grey dawn broke through the roof lights, "on till the dynamo man with a thankful heart and a weary body" was told to switch off the current. Worried wives "roused the domestics out of bed and sent them down to inquire if the House was sitting as they were uneasy because Mr - had not come home".⁵² At twenty to seven resistance was overcome and the Bill passed with a majority of one. The knell of the political dominance of the wealthy had sounded.

Triennial parliaments were urged by the Tasmanian News and the Reform Association. St Hill introduced a Bill providing for them in 1888. But members showed little interest. Nicholas Brown pointed out that Parliaments rarely lasted the full five year terms and that agitation for the reduced term was confined to the capital. At the division only Clark, Fitzgerald and Gill sided with North Hobart's radical Colonel.⁵³ Politicians of all shades of opinion

52. Ibid, 23 Nov. 1890.

53. Ibid, 21 Sept. 1888.

accepted shorter parliaments as a natural corollary of payment of members. St Hill reintroduced his Bill which passed quickly through both Houses.⁵⁴

During the last twenty-five years of the century the Council increasingly lost touch with public opinion. There were only 6750 voters in 1891 and electorates were very small. Westmorland, Russell and Derwent each had under 250 voters.⁵⁵ P. O. Fysh claimed there were "many cases in which three or four families in a district returned a member".⁵⁶ Between 1885 and 1900 only 26 per cent of all elections were contested.⁵⁷ Few members showed any marked ability and attendance was poor. Discussing the Council, Fenton wrote -

Its weakness in debating power had been only equalled by its want of moderation. In dealing with important public questions it had exhibited a petulant impatience and a selfish care for narrow personal interests, which had seriously lowered its prestige; indeed in everything that gives weight and dignity to a deliberative body, the Council had shown itself distinctly inferior to the Assembly.

58

54. Ibid, 14 Novr. 1890.

55. S. of T., 1891.

56. M., 7 Oct. 1885.

57. S. of T., 1885 - 1900.

58. Fenton, J., op.cit., p. 415.

Several governments attempted to change the Constitution between 1884 and 1900, but they met with meagre success. But reformers' zeal was sharpened by defeat and demands for change became progressively more radical.

The moderate reforms proposed by Giblin in 1884 were an outcome of Council opposition to public works during the late seventies and early eighties. The government suggested that four members should retire each year instead of five every three years. While wishing to bring the Upper House into closer touch with public opinion, Giblin told J. B. Walker that he did not want to abolish the check on hasty legislation or interfere with the Council's independence.⁵⁹ But the proposal was vetoed in the Upper House. The following year the government increased the size of the Council from fifteen to eighteen, proposed that one third of the Council should retire every two years, and attempted to create six three-member districts. During debate in the Upper House Fysh attacked the small electorates and charged his colleagues with representing "little coteries".⁶⁰ But amendments were ruthless and the "men of small electorates and small ideas had their way".⁶¹ As a concession Councillors accepted a

59. Diary of J. B. Walker, 3 Aug. 1884.

60. M., 7 Oct. 1885.

61. T. N., 7 Oct. 1885.

scheme whereby three members were to retire each year.

Clark's Constitution Bill of 1895 contained clauses for the dissolution of the Council if it twice rejected a measure and the Assembly returned to the electorate. It passed the House with a majority of two but lapsed in the Council. The following year Fysh introduced a Bill to adopt the referendum as a means of by-passing Council opposition. Dobson warned that members would become "absolutely subject to the people" and the House "would fall lower and lower".⁶² However, the Bill was accepted by a small majority. But it was intended as a show of strength and the government allowed it to lapse after the second reading. A Bill of 1899 proposed to give the Governor power to dissolve the Council. After its rejection in the Upper House the government appealed to the Privy Council. But Joseph Chamberlain pointed out that no constitutional change could be affected without approval of the Upper House.⁶³

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62. M., 14 Novr. 1896.

63. Ibid, 2 Decr. 1899.

ELECTORAL.

Working class electoral power was vitiated by the need for wage earners to re-register each year. The Trades and Labour Council, working class political organizations, and assorted liberal associations enrolled voters, but forgetfulness and apathy militated against total enfranchisement. Clark attempted to abolish annual registrations in 1890. His consolidating Electoral Act passed the second reading without division but in Committee the reforming clause was struck out.⁶⁴ N. J. Brown, voicing conservative objections, said that while "householders and all interested in the country should have a vote ... they wanted some guarantee that the interest was a settled one ... that they were not going to allow an influx of miners without domestic ties, to vote here this month and depart to Victoria the next".⁶⁵ In 1895, '96 and '99 the Braddon government unsuccessfully attempted to make the method of registration easier. The introduction of manhood suffrage in 1900 finally placed all voters on an equal footing.

64. Ibid, 26 Sept. 1890.

65. Ibid, 11 Sept. 1890.

The closing of polling booths at 6 p.m. added to the handicaps of the working class voter. In 1885 the Reform Association urged extension of polling hours until 8 p.m. In September a public meeting called by the Association discussed the question, and a petition bearing over 1100 signatures was presented to parliament.⁶⁶ The Electoral Bill of that year attempted to introduce the reform but the relevant clause was rejected in Committee.⁶⁷ W. Brown claimed it would lead to riot and disturbance, while J. W. Norton-Smith, member for Wellington and manager of the Van Diemen's Land Company, said there was more chance of rows and larrikinism after dark. A year later, St Hill introduced a motion for the extension of polling hours which was accepted with the Speaker's vote.⁶⁸ Clark's Electoral Bill of 1890 attempted to capitalize on the favourable motion but the clause was rejected by a considerable majority.⁶⁹ Members again agreed that it was undesirable to encourage the working classes to congregate after dark. William Burgess, merchant

66. J. of P. & P., IV, 1885, paper 111.

67. M., 19 Sept. 1885.

68. Ibid, 26 Novr. 1886.

69. Ibid, 15 Novr. 1890.

Mr. Robert said "they all knew what was likely to follow." There was a house near; they would get in there at 10 o'clock, and it was very undesirable that Parliament should encourage anything of that kind".⁷⁰

Plural voting was an established feature of elections until the first year of the twentieth century. During a debate in the Assembly in 1885, Henry Lamb, the MP for Clarence, said that "not many years ago he happened to be at Green Ponds recording his vote, when he met Mr. Askin Morrison and Mr. Charles Degraives (who) had voted at Robert, then at Brighton and Green Ponds and were on their way to vote at Oatlands".⁷¹ An official return of 1895 indicated that 1553 Assembly electors had 3,853 plural votes and 735 Council electors had 1,682.⁷² With well over 10 per cent of the voting power plural voters were able to swing the balance in many close contests. The holding of elections on different days facilitated the exercise of multiple votes. When, towards the end of 1884, Parliament abolished staggered elections, Dodds complained that property owners were being stripped of their power. W. A. B. Gellibrand

70. Ibid, 11 Sept. 1890.

71. Ibid, 17 Sept. 1885.

72. Ibid, 16 July 1895.

said elections should extend over a ten-day period to allow the full representation of property.⁷³

Platforms of both the Reform Association and the Trades and Labour Council included the abolition of plural voting. 'One man - one vote' was a traditional liberal shibboleth. In 1891 St Hill introduced a motion urging legislation on the principle.⁷⁴ He said it was law in South Australia and New Zealand and predicted it would be soon accepted in the other colonies. The coming Federation, he argued, made it imperative that Tasmania followed their lead. The motion passed by one vote.⁷⁵ St Hill prepared a Bill but did not proceed with it when Clark included the measure in his Electoral Act. But the Bill lapsed in November after the defeat of an accompanying Constitution Bill. The conservatives refused any reduction in the power of property. Henry Dobson said it would give more power to the working classes than they were entitled to and be a gross injustice to capital and intelligence. Amidst cheers from supporters he prophesied that one man - one vote would lead to disaster, capitalists would be insulted and leave the colony.⁷⁶

73. Ibid, 5, and 6 Novr. 1884.

74. Ibid, 15 Aug. 1891.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid, 15 Aug. 1891.

The supporters of the Bill, said Henry Nicholls, shut their eyes to the teaching of history. Their "spurious and deceitful liberalism", he claimed, "would lead to gross inequalities ... class representation...and a state of affairs which (would) prove much more serious" than they realized.⁷⁷ Electoral Acts of 1895 and 1899, incorporating the abolition of plural voting, were defeated in the Council. With the passage of the Constitution Act of 1900, one man - one vote was accepted as the basis of future assembly elections.

Between 1856 and 1870 the twenty-two rural districts returned one member while Hobart and Launceston were multiple electorates returning five and three members respectively. During the depressed sixties many looked askance at urban electoral arrangements. Conservative politicians were concerned with the power of the 'Hobart mob'. As electors were restricted to one vote per district, plural voting was confined to the country. Lacking this traditional aid the property vote was often swamped in the towns. During the campaign for the 1861 General Elections suggestions were made to divide Hobart and Launceston into eight single member constituencies.⁷⁸ The defeat of T. D. Chapman in the

77. Ibid.

78. Robson, L. L., *op.cit.* p.140.

capital increased conservative apprehensions. In his 1862 address to the electors of Campbell Town, F. M. Innes protested that "property-mercantile position - professional eminence ... combined with whatever amount of talent, moral worth, or independence of character, will fail to secure a seat in our cities when brought into competition with democratic extravagance, ignominious truckling to the passions of the least instructed class of voters, or vile subservience to sinister or sectarian designs".⁷⁹ In 1867 W. L. Dobson, Attorney General in the Dry Ministry, initiated a Bill to divide the cities into wards. The liberal press condemned the proposed legislation as an attempt to increase the influence of property and dilute working class voting power.⁸⁰ A petition bearing over 1400 signatures was presented to Parliament objecting to the foreshadowed Bill. A counter-petition gained only 128 supporters.⁸¹ In face of popular disfavour the Bill was withdrawn.

The extension of the franchise in 1870 incited conservative desire for electoral reform and Hobart and Launceston were surreptitiously divided into single member

79. L. E., 18 Novr. 1861.

80. T. T., 24 Aug. 1867.

81. L. C. J., XVIII, 1871, paper 64.

districts. No indication of impending change was given in the Governor's address. When introduced into the Assembly the Electoral Bill contained no provision for altering the city electorates. But it was amended in the Council, sent back to the Lower House on the same evening and pushed quickly through while many members were absent. The liberal press attacked what they considered a clandestine and unprincipled attack on the political rights of the urban population.⁸² The Launceston Examiner welcomed the end of a "preposterous" system which had allowed "mob clamour" to override "common sense and property interests".⁸³

In 1871, 217 electors had votes in two Hobart districts, 70 could vote in three, 28 in four and four in all five. Property owners had been given a total of 557 extra votes. A Reform Association report claimed the power of the property vote was increased by one-third to one-sixth in each of the eight city electorates.⁸⁴ The extra votes were sufficient to tip the balance in many elections. The "cursed ward system" became a target for a generation of reformers. An article in the Quadrilateral

82. I. I., 13, 14 Oct., 1870.

83. 15 Oct., 1870.

84. I. N., 11 March 1883.

deplored the "dishonest division" of the towns and described how "an absolute minority of the total number of electors... comprised of the large property holders and their friends and dependents (could) secure three if not four of seats in Hobart and two of three in Launceston". It was condemned in the columns of the local press, from the radical corner of the Assembly and before public meetings in Hobart. Many liberals agreed with W. A. Guesdon, who said "it was the ward system that had broken down Liberal ideas in the colony..."⁸⁵ A large petition seeking abrogation of the new electoral divisions was presented to Parliament in 1871.⁸⁶ In November 1877 a public meeting unanimously condemned the system as being opposed to the fundamental principles of the 1832 Reform Act.⁸⁷ Clark and J. D. Balfe carried the attack into the Assembly, Clark promising to advocate multiple districts as long as he sat in the House.⁸⁸

Bribery and corruption flourished in the small urban electorates. Under the 1858 Electoral Act candidates alone were liable to prosecution for corrupt practices. This gave rise to a class of professional electoral agents who were

85. M., 17 Sept. 1885.

86. L. C. J., XVIII, 1871, paper 64.

87. T., 13 Novr. 1877.

88. Ibid, 3 Aug. 1878.

immune from the penal clauses of the Act. An ingenious system was devised to circumvent the secrecy of the ballot. An elector on receiving his voting slip smuggled it out of the booth. It could then be filled in by a pliant voter in the presence of the agent. The voter placed this paper in the box and brought out his own unmarked one. With luck the process could be carried on for an indefinite time. During a debate on corrupt practices in 1885, John Watchorn said punishments should be introduced "for voters who were found with blank forms in their presence". "It was," he claimed, "a practice that often prevailed at elections".⁸⁹ The 1885 report of the Reform Association on the electoral system drew particular attention to facilities offered in the urban areas for the successful use of personal and monetary influences.⁹⁰ A speaker at a public meeting of 1885 claimed that bribery had been a characteristic of Hobart elections, where it was an easy, if expensive, matter to buy a majority.⁹¹ It was estimated that an election for Central Hobart cost one candidate £1,200 and another £700.⁹²

89. M., 21 Oct. 1885.

90. T. N., 11 March 1885.

91. Ibid, 16 Sept. 1885.

92. Speech by J. Gray in H. of A., M., 6 Novr. 1884.

In the assembly Braddon said it had been "shouted out at the housetops" that Dodds had paid for his seat.⁹³ A

Launceston Examiner editorial of 1881 claimed -

The result of an election now-a-days depends as much (perhaps more) upon the skill of the agent and the amount at his disposal, as upon the merit or ability of the candidate. The agent having received carte blanche endeavours to influence those electors who are waverers, or disinterested, or ignorant... Beer flows liberally ... cabs are hired ... millinery promised, so that wives may coax their husbands to help the donor, and in some cases the exercise of the franchise is an actual cash transaction. 94.

Early in 1885 the recently formed Reform Association decided to direct its attention to electoral reform. A committee chaired by Clark published a cogent and detailed report on the electoral system. Fusion of existing electorates into larger units was "peremptorily demanded". Two alternative schemes were proposed. The first suggested an Assembly of forty, elected by thirteen multiple electorates, and a Council of twenty with eight districts. The second proposed seven Assembly and five Council constituencies.⁹⁵ The Association adopted the second scheme at a meeting in the middle of March. Clark addressed a public meeting during the first week of May and a deputation was appointed to meet Premier Douglas. The

93. M., 17 Sept. 1885.

94. 30 Dec. 1881.

ward system was condemned by the September meeting of the Trades and Labour Council.⁹⁶

Dodds, the Attorney General of the Douglas Ministry, introduced an amending Electoral Bill in September 1885. He proposed to divide Hobart and Launceston into five two member districts and create similar electorates in Devon, Wellington and Kingborough.⁹⁷

A public meeting, convened by the Reform Association on the night before the Bill's second reading, demanded restoration of multiple urban electorates.⁹⁸

A petition, bearing over 1,000 signatures, was presented to Parliament.⁹⁹

A motion urging abolition of the wards was introduced in the Assembly. William Hart, the member for Central Launceston, said there was no strong feeling on the matter in the northern town. Dodds said he had found, when entering Parliament, "that the power of property was decreasing, and continued so, and in (his) proposal it was contemplated to take two-fifths of its remaining power away... He had already gone far enough in reducing the franchise and taking away the power of property ... he was not prepared to go any further". The motion was rejected by fifteen votes to eleven.¹⁰⁰

96. Ibid, 16 Sept. 1885.

97. M., 17 Sept. 1885.

98. T. N., 16 Sept. 1885.

99. J. & D. of P., IV, 1885, paper 111.

100. M., 17 Sept. 1885.

While the Bill was in committee Braddon attempted to introduce a number of clauses to tighten the laws relating to electoral corruption. Dodds refused the amendments but later introduced his own Bill which increased the stringency of penalties and blocked the loop-holes of the Act of 1858.¹⁰¹ In 1886 and again in 1890 St Hill moved motions to abolish the city wards but both were rejected by considerable majorities.

Intellectual unrest in the early nineties led to further questioning of existing electoral systems. All groups from reactionary to radical sifted new ideas. As in the past discontent focussed on Hobart and Launceston. The three means of division tried since 1856 had each roused opposition. Under the original system minorities were swamped and conservatives worried over working class power. The single electorates greatly increased the strength of the property vote, facilitated corruption, and allowed success to candidates lacking absolute majorities. The two-member electorates proved to be unsatisfactory. On several occasions neither successful candidate secured an absolute majority. Liberals still fretted at plural voting. Conservative concern over swamping of minority opinion flourished during the strikes and depression. Experiment with proportional representation proved more acceptable than a return to the past.

101. D. T., 7 Dec. 1885.

Proportional representation had been in vogue in liberal circles all over the Western world since the publication of Thomas Hare's 'The Election of Representatives' in 1859. Hare's scheme was lauded by John Stuart Mill, Louis Blanc and many other leading liberals. Mill described it "as among the greatest innovations yet made in the theory and practice of government".¹⁰² It inspired him with "new and more sanguine hopes respecting the prospects of human society..."¹⁰³ Despite choruses of praise Hare's system remained an unrealized theory in the British speaking world until 1896 when it was introduced in the small, remote island colony of Tasmania. Its acceptance was due largely to Andrew Inglis Clark.

In 1874 the twenty-six-year-old Clark advocated the Hare system in the Quadrilateral. He claimed it would improve the quality of members, clear the path to reform, broaden the elector's outlook, make bribery practically impossible, and render the franchise "a reality to an extent hitherto unknown". The novel theory of the seventies had become a widely accepted objective by the nineties. Proportional representation appeared to provide an answer for many of the existing problems of

102. Quoted by Brown, W. J., The New Democracy, (Lond. 1899), p.32.

103. Mill, J. S., Autobiography, (Lond. 1873), p.258.

representation. Liberals favoured the system because it promised to produce an accurate reflection of public opinion and would abolish plural voting. Many conservatives thought it would safeguard minorities against the ominous threat of mass democracy. Henry Nicholls advocated the Hare system from his accession to the editorial chair of the Mercury in 1884. He thought it an essential corollary of a widened franchise.¹⁰⁴ In 1885 P. O. Fysh described the scheme as a "much desired object".¹⁰⁵ By the end of the eighties the Tasmanian News was advocating proportional representation, and reprinted Clark's Quadrilateral article in September 1890.¹⁰⁶ Premier Braddon suggested the adoption of Hare's system during discussion of the difficulties of the two member electorates in 1895.¹⁰⁷ The conservative Nicholas Brown indicated his preference for a single colony-wide electorate.¹⁰⁸ While the government's 1895 Electoral Bill was being debated a majority of members "appeared to be disposed to adopt some system "of proportional representation",^{109.}

104. M., 10 Aug. 1895.

105. T. N., 6 May 1885.

106. Ibid, 23 Sept. 1890.

107. M., 9 Aug. 1895.

108. Ibid, 30 Aug. 1895.

109. Ibid, 10 Aug. 1895.

On the evening of August 12, 1896, Clark introduced the second reading of his Electoral Amendment Act which introduced proportional representation for Hobart and Launceston and divided the three two-member rural districts. He endeavoured to explain the system to his colleagues "somewhat after the fashion that children are persuaded to take physic".¹¹⁰ He claimed it would not only remove the objections of the three systems used since 1856, but give real and perfect representative government and raise the whole tone of public life. Clark proposed modifications of Hare's rules for the transfer of surpluses and so greatly reduced the element of chance.¹¹¹ Despite his patient and exhaustive explanation many remained confused. But the relevant clauses passed without division.¹¹² The Bill encountered more virile opposition in the Upper House. Adye Douglas suggested Clark's South Hobart seat was in danger and that his motives were not purely disinterested.¹¹³ The Council finally accepted the Bill for a trial period of twelve months. The Hare-Clark system met with a mixed response.

110. Ibid, 13 Aug. 1896.

111. Piesse, E. L., op. cit., p. 42.

112. Cl, 22 Aug. 1896.

113. M., 10 Oct. 1896.

The conservative press greeted the innovation, the labour Clipper was suspicious. Any system, said editor Paton, involving a whole page of foolscap covered with instructions was too complicated. He claimed it had been designed to prevent the people giving a direct mandate to Parliament, would encourage conservatism of the "ultra Tory type" and emphasised Clark's "dereliction from Democracy".¹¹⁴

The first election under the Hare-Clark system was held in January 1897. Interest was high though the enthusiasm "commonly present at big elections was a trifle subdued or toned down..."¹¹⁵ Electors mastered the new system with greater ease than had been expected. There were 104 invalid votes cast at Hobart and 58 at Launceston.¹¹⁶ Many plural voters, confused by the new system, mistakenly used it when voting in city booths for country electorates.¹¹⁷ The count proceeded smoothly and results were posted shortly after the usual hour. The election produced few surprises. Six of nine sitting members were returned. The only satisfactory result of the election, said the Clipper, was "to have ascertained by actual experience that there is nothing revolutionary about the Hare system".¹¹⁸

114. 25 July, and 1 Aug. 1896.

115. M., 21 Jan. 1897.

116. L. E., 21 Jan. 1897.

117. D. T., 21 Jan. 1897.

118. C., 23 Jan. 1897.

The scheme was extended for a year in October 1897 and September 1898. In 1899 D. C. Urquart introduced a Bill applying it to the whole colony. Seven large electorates, returning from four to seven members were to be created, and new methods of surplus transfer adopted. The Bill ran into a storm of criticism. Opponents claimed the system was not understood and that large electorates would make canvassing difficult. Country members were almost universally opposed to any extension of the scheme. Over 1400 Hobart electors signed a petition demanding its abandonment.¹¹⁹ The government was forced to withdraw the Bill. Another, to continue the Act of 1896 till the end of March 1900, narrowly escaped defeat. The following year the original Act was extended for nine months. The Lewis government attempted to apply the system on a colony-wide basis in 1901. But ministerial resolve wilted under attack and single member electorates were re-established in Hobart and Launceston. Finally in 1907, the year of Clark's death, proportional representation was adopted for the whole state.

Electoral redistribution was a major item of the reformers' agenda. Inequalities were apparent in 1856.

119. J. & P. of P., XL, 1899.

By the eighties population movements had aggravated the problem. The Reform Association's report of 1885 included a detailed indictment of the faulty distribution. Of 16,000 voters on the 1884 electoral rolls, 5,240 were in sixteen of the thirty-two electorates while the remaining sixteen held 11,660. Half the Assembly was returned by less than one-third of the electorate. The cities were under-represented. The five Hobart districts held 4,115 electors. Thirteen country electorates contained only 3,819. Glamorgan, Richmond and Clarence with 488 voters returned the same number of members as Launceston with 2,364. Eleven hundred West Hobart electors were represented by one member. Morven, Clarence, Glamorgan, Ringwood and Richmond with 100 voters less, returned five. Hobart and Launceston with 6,480 electors had eight members. The rural districts with 10,416 had twenty-four. The report concluded that the only basis for representation was population, despite the arguments "employed by the advocates of the representation of special interests as against numbers". It considered that all schemes "having other than a numerical basis propos(ed) to put into the hands of a minority power which it considered unsafe to entrust to a majority". 120.

120. I. N., 11 March 1885.

The debate on the 1885 Electoral Bill illustrated the clash of two concepts of representation. The size of the Assembly was increased from thirty-two to thirty-six. Hobart and Launceston were each given an extra member. The North West Coast gained two further seats and the electorate of Ringarooma was created in the North East. The old southern electorate of Clarence was wiped from the electoral map. But inequalities remained and the rural areas were still over-represented. The government had based their redistribution on population and property valuations. The Bill, said Dodds, gave "proper representation of the different interests". Liberals were dissatisfied. Their demand for representation on a basis of population was dismissed as giving "the masses power to override every other interests",¹²¹ and was considered "far too radical for consideration".¹²²

No significant change was made to the electoral divisions until after the turn of the century. The mushroom growth of the West coast created an urgent need for new electorates, but the coast was grossly under-represented throughout the nineties. Separate representation was given to Zeehan in 1893 when the electorate of Montagu was formed.

121. M., 23 Sept. 1885.

122. Speech by J. M. Dooley, M., 17 Sept. 1885.

In 1898 Urquart represented over 2,500 voters, more than the combined total of Cressy, Campbell Town, Glamorgan, Longford and Oatlands. During that year the Lyell district was established. In 1900 the two West coast members represented over 5,500 electors. The need for complete redistribution was widely admitted by the end of the decade, but the approach of Federation delayed reform. In 1903 thirty-five single member electorates were created, the mining districts received four seats and the most glaring inequalities were removed.

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SOCIAL.

The Masters and Servants Act passed by the old Council in 1856 was not amended until 1882. The more stringent measures fell into disuse in many districts. The Act was administered tenderly in the cities but often quite harshly in the older rural areas.¹²³ Its very existence on the statute books made it the means of acts "little short of cruelty".¹²⁴ W. R. Giblin related how a man, having a justified dispute with his employer, moved from the North West coast to Hobart where he was arrested and compelled to walk back to answer charges which were almost immediately dismissed.¹²⁵ In 1883, seventy-four apprehensions were made under the Act.¹²⁶ The practice of demanding a month's notice before the termination of services had been generally dispensed with. A petition to the Council in 1881, seeking amendment of the relevant clause, claimed that it operated so as to "embarrass trade arrangements, and inconvenience both parties".¹²⁷ But workers were often arrested by vindictive employers after giving only a week's notice.¹²⁸ A letter in the Southern

123. Speeches in Legislative Council, M., 24 Aug. 1882
Letter from 'Mechanic', T.N., 28 Feb. 1884.

124. Speech by W. R. Giblin, M., 2 Aug. 1882.

125. Ibid.

126. Speech by A. Douglas, M., 30 Oct. 1884.

127. L. C. J., XXXI, 1881

Star in 1882 from a native Tasmanian, returned after twenty-two years' absence, suggested reasons why the colony was unable to keep its immigrants. He blamed the Masters and Servants Act which he had heard denounced "500 miles in the interior of South Australia ... by men who came out at Tasmania's expense". "During the last twenty years", he continued, "I have been thrown among some hundreds of immigrants, and I can safely say that not one in a hundred of them knows this island by the name of Tasmania, but it is well known as Van Diemen's Land, the land of white slavery".¹²⁹

Giblin introduced a Bill to amend the Act in August 1882. He proposed to reduce the period of notice necessary before the termination of service and rescind the power of justices of the peace to issue warrants for presumed offences without previously issuing a summons. The Bill passed the Assembly without division.¹³⁰ During debate in the Council T. D. Chapman said he had helped to frame the old Bill and "had lived to see the servants the masters".¹³¹ In Committee objection was taken to the clause removing the right of summary arrest. W. A. B. Gellibrand said the "whole

129. 11 Oct. 1882.

130. L. C. J., XXXI, 1881.

131. Ibid, 24 Aug. 1882.

machinery of an establishment" could be upset by an absconding servant. William Moore alone voted for the retention of the clause.¹³² But by 1884 opposition had evaporated. A Bill to repeal the clause introduced by Lette of North Launceston passed through both Houses with little trouble.¹³³ In 1887 Clark introduced further legislation to allow servants to give evidence against their masters in court. This disability had frequently been enough to ensure conviction in the country.¹³⁴ The Bill passed both Houses without lengthy discussion, dissent, or division.

In November 1887 Colonel St Hill, with the support of the Trades and Labour Council, introduced legislation to legalize the Eight-hour day. Members showed little interest in the Bill and after a desultory debate it was defeated by fifteen votes to five. Fenton, one of the more liberal politicians, said that although he favoured the working man he would never vote for such blatant class legislation.¹³⁵ The tenacious Colonel re-introduced the Bill every year until 1892. It was rejected with monotonous regularity. In 1888 it passed into committee to be defeated by fifteen votes to eight.¹³⁶

132. Ibid.

133. Ibid, 24 Oct., and 1 Novr. 1884.

134. Ibid, 12 Aug. 1887.

135. Ibid, 18 Novr. 1887.

136. Ibid, 21 Sept. 1888.

The following year it was shelved on the second reading by a vote of twenty-one to six.¹³⁷ During the 1890 debate E. H. Sutton, the conservative member for Cressy, said that there were districts where "previously employers and employees had got on harmoniously", but ever since the introduction of the Bill "there had been covert threats of what would be done when (it) became law".¹³⁸ St Hill managed to steer the Bill through to the third reading in 1891 only to have it rejected on the casting vote of the speaker. Henry Dobson claimed that it departed from the principles of human nature.¹³⁹ In the following year the Bill finally reached the Legislative Council where it was quietly shelved.¹⁴⁰ After St Hill's defeat in the 1893 elections, his mantle as champion of the Eight-hours Bill was assumed by D. C. Urquhart. But he had as little success as his predecessor. The Bill passed the Assembly in 1894 and 1895 but was rejected in the Upper House. Watchorn summarized the attitude of his fellow members when he advised working men to keep away from agitators and regard their "strong arm, energy, self-reliance and frugality"

137. Ibid, 6 Aug. 1889.

138. Ibid, 17 Sept. 1890.

139. Ibid, 19 Aug. 1891.

140. Ibid, 1 Decr. 1892.

"to their best friend. If they pursued that policy, he said, "they would require no legislation to take care" of them.¹⁴¹

During 1883 Giblin introduced the first legislation bearing directly on the employment of women and children.

His Women's and Children's Employment Act, based on New Zealand statutes, prohibited employment of children under twelve, restricted working hours for both women and children to eight, and regulated meal times, ventilation and sanitation. Giblin claimed the legislation was urgently required, but he failed to convince the House and the Bill lapsed in Committee.¹⁴² He re-submitted it the following year. Henry Rooke thought legislation was "becoming too sentimental" and moved to have the Bill shelved. It survived the motion and passed to the Council. Large land-owner Donald Cameron said it was "monstrous to impose such restrictions on employers and owners of property".¹⁴³ But the Bill was accepted after a number of minor amendments were made.

Six years later a Bill to appoint inspectors was introduced. The municipal police had failed to enforce the provisions of the Act of 1884. The government did not correspond with the Hobart or Launceston corporations regarding

141. Ibid, 23 Aug. 1894.

142. Ibid, 25 Oct. 1883.

143. Ibid, 25 Oct. 1884.

the legislation and they consequently ignored its provisions. During debate in the House, J. G. Davies, who had been Mayor of Hobart at the time, said he thought "the government should have communicated with the Corporation and asked them to carry it out".¹⁴⁴ The majority of members agreed with Samuel Hawkes, mine manager from Ringarooma, who said there was already too much interference with enterprise, and the Bill lapsed.¹⁴⁵ It was re-introduced the following year and accepted by the Assembly only to be shelved in the Upper House.¹⁴⁶ St Hill brought the Bill up again in 1892 when it was defeated on the third reading in the Assembly.¹⁴⁷

J. S. Dodds introduced legislation for the inspection of machinery and boilers during 1884. It aroused little comment and passed quickly through both Houses.¹⁴⁸ In 1889 and 1896 Clark introduced amending Bills to tighten controls which were both readily accepted. In 1881 a Bill passed providing for the inspection and regulations of mines.¹⁴⁹

144. Ibid, 8 Aug. 1890.

145. Ibid.

146. Ibid, 28 Oct. 1891.

147. Ibid, 29 Oct. 1892.

148. Ibid, 13 and 19 Novr. 1884.

149. Ibid, 2 Novr. 1881.

Pillinger introduced an amending Bill ten years later. The earlier legislation had proved inadequate for the full protection of miners. Clauses adopted from Victorian and New Zealand Acts provided for control of ventilation, timbering, machinery and explosives. Managers were to be registered and held responsible for the safety of the mines. Hours of underground work were to be limited and children prohibited from working in the mines.¹⁵⁰ The Lower House accepted the new Bill but Premier Fysh was its solitary supporter in the Council. Adye Douglas complained that "there was a desire in some quarters for the eight-hour system and unionism, and the government seemed to be especially favourable to it".¹⁵¹ A similar Bill foundered in the Council in the following year.¹⁵²

Urquart introduced a number of measures for social reform both as a private member and as Attorney General in the Braddon Ministry. His west coast electorate was more deeply concerned with social legislation than any in the colony. During his first month in the House he initiated a Bill to prevent wages being attached for debt, a practice prevalent on the minefields, where "once a man got into debt, his case was a hopeless one, as his wages were garnisheed,

150. Ibid, 24 July 1890.

151. Ibid, 14 Sept. 1890.

152. Ibid, 18 Sept. 1891.

and (he) and his family were left without a penny".¹⁵⁴

There were 206 orders for attachment of wages at Zeehan in 1896.¹⁵⁵ The Bill, accepted in the Assembly, was rejected by the Council.¹⁵⁶ Further attempts to pass the Bill in 1895, 6, 8, and 9 met the same fate. During debate in the Council in 1899, Grant and Hart said they had been requested by the minefield shop-keepers to oppose the Bill. Watchorn said the working man should be encouraged to be "manly in the discharge of his duties and obligations in life".¹⁵⁷

In August 1900 the Bill again passed the Assembly 'amidst cheers' from its supporters. As a concession to the Council it allowed the attachment of one pound per week.¹⁵⁸ It was accepted by a majority of one. During 1899 Urquart brought in legislation to protect a portion of tenants' property from predatory landlords. It received general support in the Assembly passing all stages without division but was rejected in the Council as another piece of "grand motherly legislation".¹⁵⁹

154. M4, 22 Aug. 1896

155. Ibid, 28 July 1894.

156. Ibid, 25 Novr. 1899.

157. Ibid, 18 Aug. 1900.

158. Ibid, 6 Sept. 1900.

159. Ibid, 17, 22, and 25 Novr. 1899.

During 1894 Urquart introduced an Employers' Liability Act which aimed to extend and regulate the liability of employers to compensate workers injured because of defective machinery, negligence of superintendents or when acting under employers bye-laws. The Bill passed rapidly through the Assembly but was shelved in the Council. Members agreed with William Hart who said that protection assured to employers was already sufficient.¹⁶⁰ In the following year the Council accepted the Bill but limited its operation until the end of 1898.¹⁶¹ Henry Dobson introduced a Workers Compensation Act in 1899. It was peremptorily rejected in the Upper House. Grant claimed it would "entirely upset all industrial operations in the Colony".¹⁶² The Bill was again shelved in 1900. The Clipper, fulminating against the Council, described members as "hidebound and purse-bound dotards of a bye-gone day" who regarded workers as "mere pawns to be juggled with, mere forces to be exploited for the benefit of the fat man monopolist and company promoter", and who talked of the price of labour "impassively as of a piece of soap".¹⁶³

as of a piece of soap".¹⁶⁴

160. Ibid, 9 Aug. 1894.

161. Ibid, 18 Aug. 1894.

162. Ibid, 25 Sept. 1895.

163. Ibid, 8 Decr. 1899.

164. 28 July 1900.

After 1890 the government showed greater concern with agriculture and land settlement. A Council of Agriculture was established in 1891. During 1894 the government assisted the overseas export of butter, fruit and timber.¹⁶⁵ An Act of 1893 facilitating settlement, allowed any person to select one lot of country land from fifteen to fifty acres in extent, at 26s.8d. per acre.¹⁶⁶ No deposit was demanded and terms of repayment were liberalized. In 1898 Braddon introduced a Bill to provide government loans to settlers. Large numbers of farmers in his electorate, he said, had looked forward for years to such a system.¹⁶⁷ Many had been crippled by high interest rates charged by banks and had lost their properties.¹⁶⁸ Bird regarded the measure as a step towards state socialism. In initiating such a policy, he said, the government was "taking a step in a direction different from anything they had hitherto done and one that might lead to interference still further with private enterprise". The Mercury agreed with him, but admitted that a "judicious departure" from laissez-faire principles could "do great good".¹⁶⁹

165. M., 2 Jan. 1895.

166. Coghlan, T. A., op. cit., IV, 2006-08.

167. M., 24 June 1898.

168. Speech by W. Moore in Legislative Council, M., 6 July 1898.

169. M., 23 June 1898.

The Bill passed the Assembly by twenty-one votes to six, but was ruthlessly amended in the Council. The emasculated Bill proved unworkable and Braddon intended to introduce amendments the following year.¹⁷⁰ But his government fell in October. The new Ministry was disinterested in land credit and the Bill was never acted upon.

Education never became a major political issue during the eighties and nineties. Developments were important but unspectacular. The struggle for secular education was won in the fifties and the Public Schools Act of 1868 enforced compulsory attendance. Free education was not adopted till after the turn of the century. But public interest quickened early in the eighties and many became concerned with the condition of Tasmanian education. A Select Committee of 1882 and a Royal Commission the following year both reported that schools and teachers were below Australian standards. The Committee's investigations "conclusively show(ed) the considerable reform (was) necessary".¹⁷¹

In 1881 the average educational expenditure of the Australian Colonies was 8s.6d. per head of population. Tasmania spent only 3s.11½d. per head.¹⁷² The administrative

170. Ibid, 13 July 1899.

171. H. A. J., XLIII, 1882, paper 106.

172. Report of the Royal Commission on Education, H.A.J., XLV, 1883, paper 70.

machinery was cumbersome and inefficient. Authority was divided between the Chief Secretary, the Central and Local Boards of Education, and the Inspectors. Exemptions embodied in the Act of 1868 made a farce of compulsory attendance. While 13,600 scholars were on the rolls in 1881, the average attendance was only 6,700.¹⁷³ Teachers were poorly paid, many receiving less than "the wages of day-labourers and carters".¹⁷⁴ They depended on fees to supplement their incomes, but irregular attendance whittled away their livelihood and local Boards abused the power of remitting payments.¹⁷⁵ During 1872, 75 of the 139 government schools each received less than twenty pounds in fees.¹⁷⁶ The great majority of teachers were untrained and standards of tuition were low. The proportion of pupils who left without passing grade V. was "miserably large".¹⁷⁷

The Education Act of 1885 implemented many of the reforms urged by the enquiries of 1882 and 1883 and constructed the basic administrative scaffolding around which

173. Reeves, C., A History of Tasmanian Education, I., (Mlb.1935) p.35

174. Report of Royal Commission, op.cit.

175. M., 3 Decr. 1885.

176. Report of Royal Commission, op.cit.

177. Reeves, C., op.cit., p.73.

the present day system has evolved. The old Board was replaced by a Department under the control of the Chief Secretary. The curriculum was expanded and model schools were established for the training and classification of teachers. Regulations were laid down regarding the building of schools, teaching conditions, discipline, appointments and promotions, text books and holidays. The leaving age was raised from twelve to thirteen and clauses enforcing attendance were strengthened.

In 1896 Braddon introduced a Bill to make attendance compulsory for five instead of three days a week. He also proposed to establish control over private schools by instituting a system of licenses. Many of the smaller non-state schools existed "rather for the conservation of ignorance than for the promotion of learning",¹⁷⁸ and were used by parents wishing to evade compulsory education. The Bill was strongly criticised and eventually lapsed in Committee. The Roman Catholic, Edward Mulcahy, said it gave Ministers power "nothing short of tyranny" and could be used to compel every child to attend a State school. John Hamilton, the merchant member for Glenorchy, thought the Bill an outrage to commonsense "and worthy of the Czar of Russia".¹⁷⁹

178. Report of Royal Commission, *op.cit.*

179. *M.*, 6 Aug. 1896.

But two years later Henry Dobson initiated a private member's Bill which enforced five days attendance and made it compulsory for private schools to forward their registers to the Education Department.¹⁸⁰ In 1900 the Lewis government attempted to introduce free education. In the Council, William Doderer complained that the money for the scheme "would come out of the pockets of parents ... who would not benefit "by it. Several of his colleagues suggested that private schools would demand government subsidies and the Bill was rejected by a large majority.¹⁸¹

The Trades and Labour Council advocated technical education from its foundation late in 1883. The Education Act of 1885 empowered the government to establish technical schools but no immediate action was taken. A Tasmanian News editorial claimed the existing system of education overlooked the needs of the masses and endeavoured to cultivate "a few polished gentlemen" who considered it degrading "to soil their hands with health giving manual labour".¹⁸² A petition from artizans and tradesmen claimed Tasmanian industry languished because of a lack of skilled tradesmen and urged

180. Ibid, 2 July 1898.

181. Ibid, 10 Novr. 1900.

182. 4 July 1887.

the government to provide education for the working classes.¹⁸³
 In 1886 Braddon successfully moved a motion for the immediate establishment of technical schools and £200 was voted in the estimates for 1887.¹⁸⁴ The Hobart Technical College was opened on February 1, 1888. By 1892 there were schools at Launceston, New Norfolk, Devonport, and Latrobe and classes were held at Longford, Forth, Dunorlan, Sheffield, and West-bury.¹⁸⁵

The Council of Education, founded in 1858, held examinations "in imitation of the Oxford and Cambridge annual local examinations" and conferred the degree of Associate of Arts. Two scholarships were awarded annually for study at English Universities.¹⁸⁶ But the system came under fire in the seventies and eighties. The A. A. degree was not recognized outside the colony, and a University education was beyond the reach of all but the wealthy or exceptionally clever. The majority of scholarship winners did not return to the island on completing their degrees. The Council urged the establishment of a University in 1875 and prepared a Bill which was accepted by the House of Assembly. But it reached the Council too late in the session to be considered

183. J. & P. of P., XII, 1887, paper 81.

184. M., 2 Oct. 1886.

185. Report of Inspector of Schools, J. & P. of P., 1892 XXVI, paper 51.

186. Walch's Red Book, 1881.

and the proposal was not revived for seven years.¹⁸⁷ Giblin introduced a second University Bill in 1882. Bird said he feared the establishment of a University would expose the colony to ridicule and the degrees "would perhaps be like some American degrees, more laughed at than valued".¹⁸⁸ A majority of members agreed and the Bill was shelved.

Seven years later Bird introduced the Bill which established the University of Tasmania. It passed the second reading without division but was strongly criticized by Fitzgerald and St Hill. Fitzgerald said it contained all the "aristocratic evils and narrow conservatism" found in the Old Country and would "widen class differences instead of welding together the whole".¹⁸⁹ The Bill proposed a Council of eighteen elected by a Senate of all the graduates resident in Tasmania. Fitzgerald successfully moved that nine members should be appointed by the government. It was, he asserted, notorious that such bodies "clung to their interests and saw no good outside their own order".¹⁹⁰ The Bill passed quickly through the Council after a short debate.¹⁹¹

187. Report of the Council of Education, H.A.J., XLII, 1882 paper 78.

188. M., 12 Aug. 1882.

189. M., 26 Oct. 1889.

190. Ibid, 30 Oct. 1889.

191. Ibid, 20 Novr. 1889.

In 1895 the infant University narrowly escaped the 'Braddon axe'. The government proposed to reduce the vote from £3000 to £1500 and to dismiss the teaching staff. Braddon said he thought the University an expensive luxury and that Technical Schools were more value to the community. McDonald refused to support the University vote until there was a school for every working man's child. During an impassioned speech Clark exalted higher education. But the motion was accepted by twenty-one votes to twelve.¹⁹² Members, said the Mercury,¹⁹³ displayed as narrow and parochial spirit as perhaps has ever been seen in any of these colonies since they have had Constitutional Government".¹⁹³ But the Council unanimously raised the vote to £2,500 and the University survived its first ordeal.

The surge towards democracy made by mainland colonies between 1856 and 1865 left Tasmania behind, contemplating the past amid the ruins of a once healthy economy. But change came quickly in the island after 1880 and by the turn of the century the statute books had been remodelled.

192. Ibid, 25 July 1895.

193. Ibid, 19 Oct. 1895.

The legislation discussed above was the fruit of the liberal inspired reform movement, while conservatives, lacking a definite programme, merely resisted change. But such legislation occupied only a portion of parliamentary time. Public works and finance clamoured for attention and ways and means of meeting the cost was an ever present concern.

THE PERENNIAL PROBLEM.

The problem of revenue and taxation dominated every Parliament between 1856 and 1900. The perennial question of who and what to tax roused deeper feelings than any other governmental activity and provided a sensitive barometer for gauging the pressures of interest and class. P. O. Fysh remarked that, more than any other issue, taxation drew "a line of demarcation between parties" in the House, and enabled "electors to distinguish between the liberal or democrat and his spurious imitator".¹ Fundamental regional, class and ideological cleavages were manifested in the Parliamentary struggles over schemes of taxation.

DIRECT TAXATION.

The elections for the first Parliament were staged amid deepening depression. Many candidates advocated retrenchment and increased taxation, but disagreement over ways and means of gleaning added revenue was "the stumbling block in the way of legislation for the next two decades".² Maxwell Miller, Hobart's radical M. H. A., advocated income and

1. M., 15 Oct. 1897.

2. Robson, L. L., op. cit., P. 23.

property taxes. But he found no supporters among the conservative landowners and merchants who filled the benches of the first Parliament. The Champ Ministry (1856-7) attempted to arrest the fall of revenue by increasing duties on food and clothing. In Hobart popular reaction was immediate. Five thousand people attended a protest meeting in the New Market Place. Four thousand eighthundred signed a petition claiming the new taxes pressed unfairly on the poor while allowing the wealthy to elude their share of the burden.³

Gregson's short-lived Ministry (February - April 1857) attempted to grapple with the financial crisis by retrenchment and encouragement of land sales. But the government fell before the scheme could be implemented. Harassed politicians toyed momentarily with ideas of protection. A Joint Committee, established in 1860, discussed the tariff, but no action was taken.⁴ Once again the government turned to the customs. In 1863 duties were increased on a number of foodstuffs and doubled on tea and sugar. Treasurer, Charles Meredith promised the new taxes would press evenly on all classes. But many were sceptical. In the Assembly, John Davies, Mercury owner and member for Devon, said he would welcome a tax which touched the wealthy pastoralists.⁵

3. Ibid, p. 66.

4. Ibid, p. 80

5. M., 24 June 1863.

A public meeting in Hobart claimed that additionalⁱ taxes on the necessities of life were oppressive and unjust.⁶

A Cornwall Chronicle editorial said the tariff had been framed "in dread of the great sheep-owners". "Every item", it claimed, had been "written under their malign and disastrous influence ...".⁷

Attempting to exact some tribute from wealth, the Whyte Ministry (1863-66) proposed^a a tax on carriages. During debate in the Assembly, T. J. Knight anathematized it as a class tax which would reduce each class to the level of the next lowest. Isaac Sherwin spoke of the hardships which would be suffered by owners of five or six carriages.⁸ The Bill passed the council by one vote. But "of all the taxes ever introduced this one (was) the most actively resisted".⁹ Municipal authorities refused to collect the duty or even furnish a return of carriages in their district.¹⁰

In 1886 the government, despairing of traditional remedies, proposed to remove duties from everything except beer, spirits and tobacco and levy a property and income tax.

6. Ibid, 3 July 1863.

7. 4 July 1863.

8. M., 4 July 1863.

9. Fenton, J., op. cit. p.320.

10. Ibid.

A deluge of protest burst over the heads of Ministers. The conservative press was horrified. Meetings at Carrick, Westbury, Evandale and Longford condemned the proposals.¹¹ The Bill passed the second reading in the Assembly, was emasculated in Committee and quietly jettisoned. But depression still hung heavily. In 1868 package duties were increased.¹² Two years later taxes on sheep, cattle, meat, grain and flour were raised.¹³ A public meeting in the Hobart Town Hall protested at the new impositions. The emancipist alderman, Abraham Rheuben, claimed they were class taxes and demanded that the government "put the tax on the rich as well as the poor".¹⁴

The men who dominated Parliament for two decades after 1856 were adamant in their opposition to direct taxation. The alternative of protection was similarly eschewed. Legislators aimed to "bring down the expenditure below the normal income which (could) be raised without injuring any interest",¹⁵ despite an ominous drift towards the rocks of national insolvency. They believed with T. D. Chapman, that "customs alone (were) the things to tax".¹⁶ They thought all

11. Robson, *op.cit.*, p. 219.

12. *Ibid*, p.277.

13. *M.*, 14 Sept. 1870

14. *T. T.*, 19 Sept. 1870.

15. *L. E.*, 30 Oct. 1866.

16. *M.*, 1 July 1863.

classes should contribute equally to the revenue. But customs duties pressed heavily on the poor and only lightly on the rich. There was an inverse ratio between worldly wealth and the burden of taxation. Reforms of the eighties only slightly redressed the balance. An official paper of 1891 indicated that workers earning under £300 contributed £367,000 per annum to the Treasury while those earning over £300 paid £92,000. Breadwinners receiving £100 and under contributed two shillings in the pound, those with incomes of £1,000 and over contributed only one shilling.¹⁷

Development of mining and small farming districts during the seventies and eighties, created a peremptory demand for public works. New sources of revenue had to be tapped. Many agreed with J. D. Balfe who said the colony "could not stand still without retrograding."¹⁸ Stabilization of public finances was a condition of material progress. And while taxation had been regarded solely as a means for harvesting revenue during the fifties and sixties, attitudes were changing by the eighties. Many discerned a secondary purpose of taxation. Liberals saw it as a means of social adjustment. They wanted to equalize the burden by imposing levies on wealth

17. Quoted by the Treasurer (J. Henry) in Financial Statement, M., 28 July 1893.

18. M., 16 Jan. 1880.

and property and removing duties from the necessities of life.

Many politicians displayed a knowledge of the British economists and spiced their speeches with quotations from Adam Smith, J. E. McCulloch and J. S. Mill. Mill's Principles of Political Economy was probably the greatest single influence. Demanding equality of taxation, Mill argued that while anyone bore less than his share another suffered to excess. The alleviation of one, he said, did not compensate for the suffering of another. He suggested that a minimum of income, sufficient to provide the necessities of life, be left untaxed. Duties on food and clothing he "peremptorily excluded".¹⁹ They influenced the distribution of wealth, lowered working class living conditions, and brought "less into the public treasury compared with what they took from the consumers, than any other imposts to which civilized nations are usually subject".²⁰

Henry George's theories became influential in the mid-eighties and a Land Nationalization Society was established in Hobart.²¹ Edward Ivey and L. Susman, prominent Reform Association members, were office bearers. The President was

19. Mill J. S., Principles of Political Economy, (London 1881) V, 2, p.523.

20. Ibid, p. 511.

21. See above, Ch. III, Below, Ch. VI.

Arthur James Ogilvie, who was born in Calcutta in 1834, educated at Malborough College, and arrived in Tasmania in the early fifties. He took a farm at Richmond, was a Justice of the Peace, and worked for a time in the Public Service. He was a Vice-President of the Land Nationalization Society of Great Britain, which printed and distributed five of his pamphlets throughout the British speaking world.²² He was an indefatigable contributor to the local press and a collection ^{his} of letters to the Mercury was published by the Hobart Society. He was in every sense a disciple of George whom he described as "the man to whom I owe most that is worth knowing".²³

But George's influence was partial on most Tasmanian liberals. Few intended to implement the full programme although particular ideas and criticisms found favour. During debate in the Assembly in 1887, G. P. Fitzgerald said he would not go the whole way with George, who nevertheless had shown "by arguments that were irresistible because they were true and true because they were irresistible, that land was a fair subject of taxation ... and to it the government must first apply for revenue".²⁴ Unimproved land value taxation appealed to the liberals as a means of appropriating unearned increment, discouraging

22. Obituary in D. P., 3 July 1914.

23. Ogilvie, A. J., The Land, (Hobt. 1887), P.28

24. M., 27 July 1887.

speculation and absenteeism, aiding the small selector, taxing rich pastoralists and forcing subdivision of large estates. It was one of the most controversial and potentially powerful weapons in the armoury of reform. The campaign to impose it was the first attempt made to modify the system of land tenure inherited from the early years of settlement and represented the Tasmanian equivalent of the 'unlock the land' crusades of the mainland colonies.

The Coalition government was formed to stabilize the finances of the colony. When Parliament met early in January 1880 to hear the policy of the new Ministry, Premier Giblin announced a deficit of £35,000. He proposed a real and personal estate duty of ninepence in the pound levied on dividends and the annual value of land, an excise duty of threepence per gallon on beer, and a revision of the customs duties. He expected to raise £55,000 additional revenue per annum. The Real and Personal Estate Duties Bill passed quickly through the Assembly. John Whitehead, member for Morven, said nothing on earth would induce him to vote for a property tax. Like the men of the sixties he urged retrenchment and higher customs duties. But he found no seconder when attempting to shelve the Bill.²⁵ Defeat was anticipated in the Upper House,

25. Ibid, 29 Jan. 1880.

but it "nobly responded to the call of duty" and accepted the new impositions.²⁶ When reviewing the session the Mercury congratulated the colonists on the way they came to the rescue of the Treasury and paid their taxes "with alacrity, and with almost universal cheerfulness". But such public spirit was notably absent during the next twenty years.²⁷

By 1882 the colony was thriving. In his financial statement Treasurer Dodds predicted a surplus of £77,000 for the year.²⁸ The government introduced a Bill to reduce the land tax by threepence in the pound and to exempt all properties valued under ten pounds. In Committee the exempting clause was strongly opposed. Urging its acceptance Giblin said that while he was "in no wise in favour of manhood suffrage" the trend of legislation in the other colonies was to assist the struggling settlers.²⁹ The clause passed the Lower House on the Speaker's casting vote but was rejected in the Council.

Dissatisfaction with existing forms of taxation was widespread in the mid-eighties. In 1880 two commissioners had been appointed to assess property values. Many landowners,

26. Ibid, 11 Feb. 1880.

27. Ibid, 1 Jan. 1881.

28. Ibid, 2 Jan. 1883.

29. Ibid, 23 Sept. 1882.

paying local rates on low municipal assessments, objected to the higher government valuations.³⁰ The Ministry yielded to pressure in 1882, basing all assessments on local rolls. But inequalities provoked further discontent. Several districts, deciding their assessments were high, struck off a certain percentage. In three cases it was as much as 10 per cent.³¹ The Launceston Examiner claimed that assessment was notoriously faulty in rural areas, where members of the bench "settled their own and their friends' difficulties by a method in which justice was overwhelmed by mercy".³² The Daily Telegraph said there were numerous instances of low rating of large properties which could not be accounted for.³³

In 1886 the government introduced a Bill to impose a duty of one half-penny in the pound on the capital value of property to replace the tax on annual rental values. Dodds said he wanted to remove the anomalies of the existing system and render the incidence more equitable.³⁴ The Opposition attacked the new scheme. The assault was led by Braddon, Bird,

30. Speech by Dodds on Land Tax Bill, M., 9 Sept. 1886.

31. Ibid.

32. 22 Feb. 1888.

33. 9 June 1886.

34. M., 3 Sept. 1886.

and Dooley, who all represented small farmer electorates and Fitzgerald and St Hill, the Hobart radicals. They claimed the "strong yeoman class" of settlers engaged in clearing the forests was the most important group in the colony. Annual and capital value taxation, said Breddon, wrung the last farthing from the small man but did not touch the wealthy pastoralist. The improved farm or orchard was highly assessed; the large unimproved pastoral property was valued at a low figure. J. S. Mill, he added, had said "that no property could be so fairly taxed as unearned/^{increment} from land".³⁵ Bird called a meeting in his district and found people "unanimous in their opposition" to the new scheme.³⁶ It was opposed by similar meetings at Glenorchy, Westbury, and North Hobart.³⁷ Thirteen petitions presented to Parliament urged withdrawal of the proposed legislation. The majority of them came from small farming or orcharding centres.³⁸ The Bill passed the second reading by fourteen votes to eight, was butchered in committee and shelved in the Council.³⁹

In July 1887, Bird, the Treasurer in the recently formed Fysh Ministry, delivered a financial statement which

35. Ibid.

36. M., 16 Sept. 1886.

37. T. N., 21 Sept., 4 Oct., and 5 Oct., 1886.

38. J. and P. of P., IX, 1886, paper 104.

39. M., 6 Dec. 1886.

"startled the colony".⁴⁰ Reporting a deficiency of £79,000 he said that with rapidly extending public works and services it was impossible to reduce expenditure. Revenue, he maintained, had to be increased by £50,000 a year. The government proposed a new and comprehensive scheme of taxation including one half-penny in the pound on unimproved land values, threepence in the pound on the annual value of farmland rated over £50, threepence in the pound on salaries exceeding £125, a tax on bank deposits, business premises, and commercial travellers. For the first time it was intended to tax land owners resident outside Tasmania.⁴¹ "Taxation", remarked the Devon Herald, "was never before attempted on any fixed principle, nor was a policy ever propounded ... by which to reach all classes".⁴²

N. J. Brown moved a motion of no confidence. The debate, lasting four days, was one of the longest in the history of Parliament up to that time.⁴³ Brown predicted the new taxes would depopulate the island and cause the withdrawal of capital. John Lyne found them "in keeping with the wave of communism that was sweeping through the land". Defending the unimproved value taxes, Clark said that while small holders had 50, to 70,

40. L. E., 2 Jan. 1888.

41. M., 16 Dec. 1887.

42. 26 Aug. 1887.

43. D. T., 19 Dec. 1887.

per cent of their capital invested in their properties, pastoralists had no more than 15 or 10 per cent invested in improvements. Capital value taxation, he urged, was unjust and encouraged speculation and absenteeism.⁴⁴ Brown's motion was defeated by seventeen votes to twelve.

Public reaction was strong. The conservative press condemned the innovations. The Daily Telegraph thought them the most absurd, unjust, inequitable and unworkable measures that "ever emanated from a Cabinet of responsible Ministers".⁴⁵ They would "sweep away the bone and sinew of the country" and strike terror into the hearts of Tasmanian breadwinners.⁴⁶ A public meeting was called in Launceston to denounce the Bill. A motion moved by prominent lawyer William Ritchie described the proposals as arbitrary, unjust, and demoralising. Ritchie claimed they would engender class antagonisms. Taxation in the past, he continued, had been marked by equality and uniformity, no-one had attempted to exempt one class in order to throw the burden on another.⁴⁷ These sentiments, said the Mercury, were those of "at least nine-tenths of the thinking people of the colony".⁴⁸

44. M., 27 July 1887.

45. 1 Aug. 1887.

46. D. T., 20 and 29 Aug. 1887.

47. L. E., 20 Sept. 1887.

48. 21 Sept. 1897.

A meeting was called in Hobart to denounce the Bill. The hall was crowded, and among those on the platform were a few ladies "who had the temerity to attend what was generally expected to be a stormy meeting". The motion condemning the government was greeted with uproar and interjection. Amidst cheers, prominent radical John Chew moved an amendment which reversed the sense of the motion. The proposals, he said, were most satisfactory, "being the nearest approach to a just and equal distribution of the burden of taxation" ever submitted to the people of Tasmania. He told his audience to stick up for their own class "and not be flunkies". Hugh Kirk seconded the amendment which was carried by a large majority.⁴⁹

Clark introduced the second reading of the Bill in the middle of September. N. J. Brown objected to "vicious exemptions" it embodied.⁵⁰ But the Assembly accepted the new scheme by sixteen votes to nine. The Council stood resolute and the Bill was shelved. William Moore, one of the most liberal M. L. C.s, said the system of unimproved taxation "ran side by side with the doctrines of land nationalization, and was simply a means of inserting the thin end of the wedge, which was afterwards driven home with Communistic force."⁵¹

49. M., 15 Sept. 1887.

50. Ibid., 29 Sept. 1887.

51. Ibid., 29 Sept. 1887.

The Fysh Ministry made its second attempt to implement a comprehensive scheme of taxation the following year. In his financial statement Bird said the government wanted to tax all wealth on an equitable basis.⁵² He proposed a levy of one half-penny in the pound on the capital value of all real estate and personal property in the colony. Furniture, personal effects, clothing, books, machinery, implements, and beasts of burden were to be exempted.⁵³ The scheme ran into strong criticism in the Committee of Ways and Means. N. J. Brown described it as a "wretched abortion" and suggested increased duties on consumer goods. He discerned the influence of "the master of Ministers, the Trades and Labour Council".⁵⁴ The Mercury called the proposals vicious and dangerous. The duty of governments, it said, was to relieve capital of burdens rather than subject it to taxation.⁵⁵ Meetings at Hobart, Launceston, and eighteen country centres opposed the Bill.⁵⁶

Clark introduced the second reading of the Personal Property taxing Bill in July. His ninety-minute speech included

52. Ibid, 2 June 1888.

53. Ibid, 21 July 1888.

54. Ibid, 30 June 1888.

55. Ibid, 3 July 1888.

56. Ibid, 9-16 Aug. 1888.

quotations from Mill, McCulloch, Gladstone, Bright and the American Senator Charles Sumner.⁵⁷ A no-confidence motion was defeated after a long debate. But the House was hostile and the government withdrew the Bill.⁵⁸ The Land Tax Bill passed the Assembly without amendment, but the Council deleted the clause taxing absentee landlords.⁵⁹ Faced with loss of expected revenue, the government retrenched rather than attempt to push fresh legislation through an unwilling Parliament.

When Parliament reassembled in January the government made its final attempt to "equalize the distribution of taxation".⁶⁰ Faced with a deficiency of £160,000, ministers proposed an income tax of ninepence in the pound on capital invested in business and fourpence in the pound on salaries and wages. Incomes under £150 were to be exempted. The artisan and working classes, explained Bird, contributed enough through the customs.⁶¹ N. J. Brown objected to such discrimination between the classes, while J. McCall, the member for West Devon, said the colony would lose capitalists and "retain only the poorer classes".⁶²

57. Ibid, 21 July 1888.

58. Ibid, 1 Jan. 1889.

59. Ibid, 22 Aug. 1888.

60. Ibid, 1 Jan. 1890.

61. Ibid, 9 Jan. 1889,

62. Ibid, 10 Jan. 1889.

A correspondent in the Tasmanian News believed income taxes would induce "lying, fraud, perjury, purse pride, false shame and innumerable other objectionable qualities".⁶³ The proposals were condemned by the Launceston Chamber of Commerce.⁶⁴ The Mercury suggested that the traditional remedy of increased duties on tea and sugar "didn't affect the people in any appreciable degree".⁶⁵ The Bill limped into Committee on the Speaker's casting vote, but the government was forced to lay it aside.

The financial situation had improved by the middle of the year. Bird felt an "inexpressible relief" that the need for new taxes had passed.⁶⁶ But his sanguine hopes were not fulfilled. The revenue for 1889 fell £6,000 short of expectations. Expenditure exceeded the estimates by £10,000. The deficit had mounted to £167,000. Like many of its predecessors, the government retrenched rather than face the arduous task of raising new taxes.⁶⁷ A meeting of Franklin electors condemned the ministry for failing to redeem its promise to equalize the burden of taxation.⁶⁸ But the keen winds of opposition had

63. 11 Jan. 1889.

64. D. T., 10 Jan. 1889.

65. 11 Jan. 1889.

66. M., 13 July 1889.

67. Ibid., 15 Nov. 1890.

68. T. N., 12 Novr. 1889.

buffeted ministers' confidence and they went to the electors in 1891 without a definite policy. Henry Nicholls described how the ministry which "set out with a professed desire to bring about fundamental reforms", had "lapsed into one which (was) glad to live from hand to mouth".⁶⁹

Taking office in August 1892, the Dobson Ministry faced dwindling revenue and mounting deficiency. It implemented a general retrenchment and increased customs duties.⁷⁰ But the colony sank deeper into depression. The deficit rose from £226,000 to £312,000 in twelve months.⁷¹ The government unsuccessfully attempted to impose an income tax and raise the levy on land. By the beginning of 1894 the deficit had climbed to £363,000. When parliament met in March, Treasurer Henry, reintroduced the Income Tax Bill which levied eightpence in the pound on incomes derived from personal exertion and tenpence in the pound on incomes gained from other sources. Incomes under £150 were exempted and there was an abatement of £120 on incomes between £150 and £400. The Bill passed rapidly through the Assembly but met with some resistance in the Upper House. Rooke claimed that people had arranged to leave the colony if the tax were imposed. William Crosby attempted to shelve the Bill but

69. M., 19 May 1891.

70. Ibid, 19 Oct. 1892.

71. Ibid, 4 Novr. 1893.

lacked a seconder. William Moore expressed the feeling of the Council when he pointed out that the financial situation was so grave that unless new taxes were accepted the Colony would lose its credit.⁷² Some minor amendments were passed, but the Council gave way after a conference with the Lower House.

The government proposed a graduated tax on the capital value of land. Braddon moved an amendment providing for a uniform tax of one penny on unimproved values. On 10 April the government Bill was defeated on the second reading.⁷³ Three days later the Braddon Ministry took office. In July Attorney General Clark introduced a Bill providing for an assessment of unimproved land values throughout the island. It passed the Assembly without division but was rejected in the Council. During a short session later in the year the Bill was re-introduced but met a similar fate.⁷⁴ But the government remained determined. While addressing his constituents, Braddon said his party existed "because of the tax on land on its unimproved capital value".⁷⁵

In August 1895 Clark introduced the second reading of a Bill to tax unimproved land values. He attacked large landowners who, leaving land idle or putting it to "only slightly

72. Ibid, 14 July 1894.

73. Ibid, 25 Aug. 1894.

74. Ibid, 26 Oct. 1894.

75. Ibid, 27 Sept. 1894.

productive use", drove selectors to the distant corners of the colony. Land, he said, was limited in quantity. Large owners excluded others from ownership and exercised control over the landless. "Therefore", he concluded, "there can be no doubt about the State having a right at all times to exercise special control over the possession and ownership of land."⁷⁶ A week later the Bill passed the Assembly by a considerable majority. Meetings at Launceston, Evandale and Longford condemned it.⁷⁷ But at Cygnet and Scottsdale it was considered "just and fair".⁷⁸ During debate in the Council, G. I. Collins, the lawyer member for Launceston, said he found farmers opposed the new tax because they were unable to understand it.⁷⁹ The Bill was defeated by twelve votes to three. The Council, said the Clipper, had once again affirmed the right of monopoly to ride on the backs of the workers. But editor James Paton admitted the proposals were premature "in so far as the necessary missionary work" had not been carried out among the people. "Only the few", he said "who (kept) themselves posted in current literature and the trend of democratic development and the land questions (were) in line with the objects of the Ministry".⁸⁰

76. Ibid, 16 Aug. 1895.

77. L. E., 20 Aug. 1895; D. I., 13 Aug. 1895.

78. T. N., 5 and 7 Aug. 1895.

79. M., 20 Sept. 1895.

80. 28 Sept. and 24 Aug. 1895.

The Braddon Ministry made two further attempts to pass a Bill for assessment of unimproved land values. In 1896 it passed the Assembly by eighteen votes to eight, but was rejected in the Council.⁸¹ The Bill of 1898 included clauses for assessment of annual and capital values. The Council deleted the unimproved clause, but the government proceeded with the assessment under another empowering the collection of "any other particulars".⁸² But returning prosperity weakened ministerial resolve and no further attempt was made to impose the tax. In 1895 there was a surplus of £13,000. It rose to £47,000 the following year and £59,000 in 1897.⁸³ The tax on incomes derived from personal exertion was abandoned in 1898. Bird, now in opposition, attacked the government. He recalled when "the standard of equity in taxation was raised and rallied around". But he was "afraid that that flag was not only very much moth eaten, but had been ruthlessly dragged down and trampled under foot".⁸⁴ In 1900 the revenue was the highest for any year in the history of the colony.⁸⁵ By Federation the liberals had not forced acceptance of their full programme of direct taxation. But they had exacted some tribute from wealth and resisted the conservative alternative of raising revenue from high customs duties.

81. M., 10 Sept. 1896.

82. Ibid., 24 Oct. 1898.

83. Ibid., 8 July 1898.

84. Ibid., 29 Sept. 1898.

85. S. of T., 1901.

CUSTOMS DUTIES.

Customs duties accounted for about 56 per cent of the total revenue in 1876. Taxes on tea and sugar alone produced one-eighth.⁸⁶ Duties on many articles of everyday consumption were high. In 1883 the levy on tea was equal to 41 per cent of its value, and on sugar to more than 20 per cent.⁸⁷ The sugar tax was ~~one pound~~^{£1} a ton higher than in any other Australian colony in 1880.⁸⁸ A Select Committee on the customs in 1881 reported that heavy duties were forcing the cost of living above that of the mainland colonies.⁸⁹ Some luxuries were "in many instances not taxed" at all, while duties on others were only half those imposed elsewhere in Australia.⁹⁰ This discrepancy, said Giblin, was "a very singular and inexplicable thing".⁹¹

Taxes on meat and stock imposed in 1870 had a marked impact on the consumption of fresh meat. The importation of carcass meat was restricted, ostensibly in retaliation to Victorian tariff policies. Between 1869 and 1872 the number of cattle unloaded at Hobart declined from 14,000 to 5,000.⁹² The price of fresh meat rose significantly. A butcher examined

86. S. of T., 1876.

87. Financial statement by J. S. Dodds, M., 2 Aug. 1883.

88. Speech by W. R. Giblin, M., 17 Jan. 1880.

89. H. A. J., XLI, 1881, paper 122.

90. Speech by W. R. Giblin, M., 17 Jan. 1880.

91. Ibid.

92. S. of T., 1869, and 1872.

by the Select Committee on customs in 1881, said he would undertake to supply meat 50 per cent cheaper if duties were removed and he could import carcasses. "I could", he said, "supply for threepence that I now charge sevenpence; I could purchase at a penny halfpenny for what I yesterday paid fivepence".⁹³ Fresh meat was beyond the reach of many of the working class⁹⁴ and their living standard was "lowered palpably".⁹⁵

From 1870 there was sporadic agitation against the meat and stock taxes. Three petitions urging reform were presented to parliament in 1875. Giblin introduced a Bill to abolish the duties in 1880. He said that while the taxes brought £2,000 to £3,000 into the Treasury each year, they took £18,000 to £19,000 out of the peoples pockets. While forcing up prices they had failed to stimulate the local industry. Their one result, he claimed, was to raise the cost of living of ninety-nine consumers for the benefit of the one producer.⁹⁶ The Bill passed the second reading but was rejected in committee. W. Hodgson, the landowning member for Richmond, said meat was cheap enough. He argued "that the poor people ... were too particular as to what kind of

93. H. A. J., XLI, 1881, paper 122.

94. Speeches by W. Burgess and Dr. Crowther, M., 11 Sept. 1884.

95. Speech by W. R. Givlin, M., 17 Jan. 1880.

96. Ibid.

meat they would eat, rejecting bullock's heads and other parts of the bullock that were quite good for food". If meat were cheapened, he asserted, the result would be "the encouragement of extravagance, idleness and every other evil".⁹⁷

The government again attempted reform in 1882. While introducing the Bill Treasurer Dodds quoted McCulloch and Mill "as to the injurious effect of taxes on necessaries".⁹⁸ Supporting Dodds, Thomas Reibey said the tax made the rich richer and the poor poorer. Removal of duties, he claimed, would enable small settlers to purchase cheaper stock. But many members were unconvinced and the Bill was rejected by a considerable majority. A Launceston public meeting in the following September demanded reform. William Ritchie said the tax was retained because it kept up the prices of the flocks and herds of large graziers. He claimed it raised the price of cattle by ~~two~~ ^{£2} pounds or ~~three~~ ^{£3} pounds per head, and sheep by ~~two~~ ^{2/-} shillings to ~~three~~ ^{3/-} shillings per head. The tax, he said, was part "of a vicious system, by which the incidence of taxation (was) made to press most severely upon those least able to bear it".⁹⁹ A petition, bearing over 1800 signatures, was presented to parliament.¹⁰⁰ A Bill to abolish the taxes,

97. M., 21 Jan. 1880

98. Ibid, 12 Aug. 1882.

99. D. T., 19 Sept. 1883.

100. H. A. J., XLV, 1883, paper 140.

introduced in October, passed the Assembly but was defeated in the Council.

The Infant Trades and Labour Council held two public meetings which condemned the tax early in July 1884.¹⁰¹ A Launceston meeting petitioned parliament in September and described the tax as "unpolitic unfair and oppressive".¹⁰² A motion urging abolition was introduced in the Assembly by William Burgess. Giblin said a "burning sense of injustice" was developing in the two cities.¹⁰³ The duties on sheep and cattle were abolished and members consented to the introduction of carcass meat for eight months of the year at a minimum charge of ~~one shilling and sixpence~~ ^{1/6} on one hundred pounds.¹⁰⁴

The issue of the meat and stock tax lay dormant till the end of the nineties. In July 1898 a deputation interviewed Braddon regarding duties on meat, wheat, flour and fruit. It was led by Hoggins and Bradley, liberal Hobart M. H. A.s and James Paton the editor of the Clipper. They complained the duties pressed unduly on the poor and suggested some lowering of the tariff was desirable in the interests of Federation.¹⁰⁵

101. T. N., 1 and 5 July 1884.

102. J. & P. of P., III, 1884.

103. M., 11 Sept., 1884.

104. Ibid, 21 Novr. 1884.

105. M., 6 July 1898.

The Democratic League agitated for reform and two petitions were presented to parliament.¹⁰⁶ A Bill to remit the duties imposed on meat during July, August, September, and October was accepted in the Assembly but shelved in the Council.¹⁰⁷ The following year Braddon introduced a Bill to remove duties on meat, boots, butter, flour, oatmeal and woollen goods. The Council again rejected the Bill. Members were determined to await Federation before relenting.¹⁰⁸ In the last days of 1900 the Council gave way and accepted the free entry of meat and stock.¹⁰⁹

In 1882, with the colony basking in prosperity, the government proposed remissions amounting to over £45,000.¹¹⁰ Duties on tea and sugar the "two articles of diet most used by the poorer classes",¹¹¹ were to be lowered by one-third. Passing the Assembly, the Bill arrived in a hostile Council. Opposing the reductions, Chapman said the people had not asked for reductions and were content.¹¹² In committee the clauses

106. Q1, 2 and 9 July 1898.

107. M., 21 July 1898.

108. Ibid, 25 Aug. 1899 and 22 Sept. 1899.

109. Ibid, 22 Dec. 1900.

110. Ibid, 2 Jan. 1883.

111. D. T., 20 July 1893.

112. M., 13 Oct. 1882.

lowering tea and sugar duties were expunged. The Council refused to reconsider its decision after a conference with the Lower House. The government laid its tattered Bill aside. Many conservatives looked upon "every pound wrung from the poorer classes as so much insurance against direct tax on wealth".¹¹³ The Bill was re-introduced the following session. Chapman said the Ministry were courting "miserable popularity" at the expense of the country. The reductions on tea and sugar were rejected on the casting vote of the Chairman.¹¹⁴ The Assembly insisted on their passage and the Upper House grudgingly accepted the remissions on tea.¹¹⁵

In 1887 the Fysh Ministry intended to raise tea duties as part of their comprehensive scheme of taxation. But after the defeat of the land tax Bill the customs duties Bill was withdrawn.¹¹⁶ Despite repeated appeals during 1888 the government refused to re-introduce the increased tea charges. Clark said they would only add to the percentage of taxation paid by the poor and intensify existing inequalities. William Hodgson, Council member for Pembroke, asked why the government had abandoned the tax. "That", he said, "was a

113. D. I., 20 July 1893.

114. M., 17 Oct. 1883.

115. M., 26 Oct. 1883.

116. Ibid, 13 Sept. 1887.

shifting about of policy which originated in the fact that Ministers had happened to dine with the Trades and Labour Council". It was, he asserted, simply bowing to mob rule, and "he would sooner live under the Czar of Russia than under mob rule".¹¹⁷

In 1893 the Dobson Ministry proposed increases on tea and sugar duties. In the cities popular reaction was strong. At a meeting in the Hobart Town Hall at the end of July, John Bradley said the taxes would rob "families who were already half starved for the want of necessities of life".¹¹⁸ A motion describing the proposed taxes as iniquitous passed unanimously. In the Temperance Hall a week later a similar gathering was congratulated by Colonel St Hill as being "an assemblage of the working class element".¹¹⁹ Prominent Launceston radicals convened a protest meeting in the Albert Hall.¹²⁰ Ministerial determination wavered and the proposals were shelved.^{121.}

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117. Ibid, 13 Sept. 1888.

118. Ibid, 1 Aug. 1893.

119. Ibid, 8 Aug. 1893.

120. D. T., 27 July 1893.

121. M., 10 Aug. 1893.

The protection-free trade controversy did not become a basic issue of Tasmanian politics. Some turned to protection in hope of salvation during the depressed sixties. The movement was strong among the working class of the capital where emancipists found great difficulty in obtaining employment. A Protection Association was formed in 1861 and five candidates contested the city seats on a protectionist ticket at the general elections of the year.¹²² The Hobart Advertiser and Launceston Cornwall Chronicle advocated tariff reform.¹²³ On the eve of the 1866 elections a meeting of artizans and mechanics in Hobart urged the adoption of protection as "the only remedy" for the deepening depression.¹²⁴ But the ruling squatter-merchant group favoured free trade. While in many cases high, the tariff was applied purely for revenue purposes. In some cases it militated against the growth of local manufactures. In 1880 Giblin explained how "we have protected the foreign importer against the home manufacturer..." who ... "found themselves handicapped by foreign goods being admitted free and the raw materials which they used being taxed".¹²⁵

During the sixties and seventies Tasmanian governments attempted to negotiate reciprocal trade treaties with Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and New Zealand.

122. Robson, L. L., op cit., p. 115 and 124.

123. Ibid, p. 99.

124. Ibid, p. 235.

125. M., 14 Jan. 1880.

But each scheme proved abortive.¹²⁶ Tasmania "had so much more to gain than any colony that would enter with her".¹²⁷ On January 13, 1885, a conference between Graham Berry and G. D. Langridge of Victoria, and Adye Douglas and William Burgess of Tasmania, met at Hobart to consider reciprocal free trade. Agreement was reached and a treaty drafted.¹²⁸ The issue was widely discussed in the local press. Interest quickened as the opening of parliament approached. The scheme was supported in Launceston and northern rural districts. Meetings at Launceston, Longford and Westbury passed favourable motions.¹²⁹ One hundred and eighty eight Wellington electors petitioned Parliament urging ratification. Southern farmers,¹³⁰ Hobart manufacturers¹³¹ and the Trades and Labour Council¹³² opposed the projected treaty. But the Tasmanian Government never submitted the treaty to parliament and it was defeated in the Victorian Legislative Assembly.¹³³

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126. Coghlan, T. A., op. cit. p.1827; Speech by W. R. Giblin, M., 11 Sept. 1884.
 127. M., 11 Sept. 1884.
 128. M., 1 Jan. 1886.
 129. M., 2 July 1885; L. E., 3 July 1885.
 130. Meetings at Jerusalem and Richmond, T. N., 6 June 1885.
 131. M., 2 July 1885.
 132. See below, Ch. VI.
 133. M., 1 Jan. 1886.

The failure of the Treaty invigorated the flagging cause of protection. Prior to the 1886 elections a Protection League was formed in Launceston. Leadership came from manufacturing and artizan groups. A series of Sunday meetings was held on the Market Green and candidates were questioned on their tariff policies.¹³⁴ But the League had little success and collapsed soon after the election. Protection made rapid strides during 1887 and 1888, particularly among farmers suffering from lack of markets and competition from mainland producers. In a letter to a nephew in South Australia, W. May, a Sandford farmer, wrote -

People here are disposed to look to 'protection' as a remedy for their troubles ... The Island cannot compete with the Mainland. Its soil is expensive to cultivate and its natural grass inferior and kept back by a colder winter and backward spring. Without doubt the people on the soil are discouraged. One of our neighbours, who holds over 2,000 acres, called to get me to sign a requisition for a protectionist meeting... I didn't sign. But I was struck by one doleful remark 'We have no chance against the people in the other colonies. Its all hard work here. I am sure I don't know what we stop here for at all, unless it is because we love the old island.' 135

Meetings were held in many rural districts in the last half of 1887. Early in September a Launceston meeting of farmers petitioned Parliament for protection of cereals,

134. D. T., 9 July 1886.

135. University of Tasmania, Department of History, Report on Historical Manuscripts of Tasmania, 5, p.55.

livestock and meat. Similar meetings were held at Brighton, Sorell, Bridgewater, Gretna, Spring Bay, Glenorchy and Macquarie Plains.¹³⁶ A National Agricultural and Pastoral Protection Association was formed at Bridgewater in October. Branches were established at Sorell and Brighton. In his first Annual Report in October 1888 the Association secretary reported the foundation of branches at Richmond, Westbury and Bellerive.¹³⁷ On January 21, 1888 the weekly Colonist was first published in Launceston. Aimed directly at farmers its first plank was protection of agriculture. "Be up and doing", it urged, "get ready for the fight, form a Farmers' Union, which will embrace every grazier and agriculturist from Falmouth to Circular Head, and from the plain of Ross to the fertile dales of Ringarooma".¹³⁸ In September 1889 the Association met delegates of the Trades and Labour Council. The two organizations decided to co-operate for electoral purposes.¹³⁹ But disparity of background and aspiration vitiated the alliance. Conservative farmers wanted protection for agriculture and had come to see high tariffs as an alternative to direct taxation. The Trades and Labour Council desired cheap food and protection of manufactures. The Council continued to support liberal politicians regardless of their fiscal policies.

136. T. N., 14 Oct. 1887; M., 22 Aug. ; 6, 19, 24 Sept. ; 22, 24 Oct.
 137. D. T., 25 Oct. 1888.
 138. 25 Feb. 1888.
 139. T. N., 26 Sept. 1889.

The opposition adopted protection during the 1887 Session.¹⁴⁰ N. J. Brown moved a motion urging tariff reform but discussion was inconclusive.¹⁴¹ The ministry remained espoused to free trade. Clark, a doctrinaire free trader, who "detested and abominated" protective tariffs threatened to resign if the government wavered.¹⁴² But ministers became concerned over the growing force of the protectionist cause. Their Customs Bill of 1888 gave 'incidental encouragement' to local industries by removing duties from raw materials used in manufactures.¹⁴³ A Select Committee, set up in 1889 to consider the tariff, advocated intercolonial free trade and standardization of existing taxes. But the report was "purposely bald and vague".¹⁴⁴ N. E. Lewis, member for Richmond and active Protection Association member, moved in favour of tariff revision. Clark said he "believed the time would come when the human mind would arrive at that height of morality which would regard a protective policy as wrong and oppressive".¹⁴⁵ The motion was defeated on the Speaker's casting vote.

140. Speech by E. Braddon, M., 4 Nov. 1887.

141. M., 28 Oct. 1887.

142. *Ibid.*, 8 June 1888; 16 Novr. 1889.

143. *Ibid.*, 28 June 1888.

144. *Ibid.*, 18 Nov. 1889.

145. *Ibid.*

Protectionist candidates contested a number of rural seats in the 1891 election.¹⁴⁶ But the prospect of Federation removed the issue from "the sphere of debatable subjects". 'Why fight on ground such as this when Federation must bring inter-colonial free trade and protection against the world?', was the pertinent question".¹⁴⁷ The Colonist ceased publication at the end of March. A motion in the Council urging negotiations for reciprocal free trade passed unanimously.¹⁴⁸ Protection remained a minor issue during the nineties. But the movement had lost its impetus and Federation killed it altogether.

146. C., 24 Jan. 1891

147. M., 23 May 1891.

148. Ibid, 19 Dec. 1891.

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Illusions of Youth.

Economic expansion after 1871 increased the demand for labour and infused confidence into the colony's working class. During 1873 wheelwrights and labourers employed on the railways, and artisans in the ship-building industry, came out on strike. The following year journeymen bakers had their hours reduced and Municipal labourers obtained a Saturday half-holiday.¹ Shipwrights, bootmakers, and carpenters and joiners founded unions between 1873 and 1876. Stonemasons formed a guild with their employers, but it collapsed after a brief existence.² There was no centralized organization to co-ordinate efforts made in the various trades, but many employers granted concessions during a period of mounting prosperity.

A slight recession early in the eighties modified working class attitudes. While attempting to preserve the wages and conditions of the boom, workers saw the weakness of their bargaining position. During 1883 the colony felt the back-wash of an Australia-wide depression.³ An orgy

1. Coghlan, T. A., op.cit. III, p. 1580.

2. Sutcliffe, J. T., A History of Trade Unionism in Australia (Melb. 1921) p.29.

3. Coghlan, T. A., op.cit. IV, p. 1826.

of speculation in 1881-2 was followed by a hangover of commercial despondency. During the spree "a very large amount was spent in visionary enterprises, worthless claims were taken up; companies were formed; shares ran up to a fictitious value, hundreds of persons, without any knowledge of the property in which they had invested, were drawn into the vortex".⁴ Many companies crashed. The number of cases and the amount sued for in the Launceston Court of Requests was a record in the history of the colony.⁵ Merchants and shopkeepers, calculating on continuing prosperity, were left with a plethora of unsold stock.⁶ Money became dearer and the total value of exports declined by about 15 per cent.⁷ Wages had reached their ceiling. Prosperity quickly returned but the mood of extravagant optimism had fled.

In November 1883 Hobart's master builders were "observed to be taking steps" towards the formation of a Builders' Association. Apprehensive tradesmen called a meeting at the Working Men's Club on the evening of ⁸ November 21.

4. Fenton, J., op.cit. p. 418.

5. L. E., 1 Jan. 1885.

6. Ibid.

7. Coghlan, op.cit., IV, p.1826.

8. 'First Biennial Report of T. & L. C.', T. N., 8 Jan. 1886.

Attendance was poor, only the shipwrights, carpenters, bootmakers, compositors, and engineers were represented. Letters of advice from the Melbourne and Sydney Trade Councils were read, the various trades were discussed and officers elected for the strongest working class organization in the history of the colony.⁹

The Hobart Trades and Labour Council was composed of two delegates from each affiliated union and financed by a levy of 3d. a quarter on each member. It expanded as organization spread to many trades in the capital. By 188 the tailors, stonemasons and bricklayers, carpenters and joiners, and painters were affiliated¹⁰ and total membership was estimated at about 700.¹¹ During 1887 a society of tanners, fellmongers and curriers was formed.¹² Council activity was confined to Hobart although several attempts were made to widen the sphere of operations. A shortlived branch was formed at New Norfolk in 1884.¹³ During 1884 and 1887 unsuccessful attempts were made to organize a council in Launceston. But sectional jealousies were strong and

9. T. N., 22 Nov. 1883.

10. Walch's Red Book, 1887.

11. Official Report of the Fourth T. U. C., Adelaide 1886.
(Adelaide 1886) p. VI.

12. T. N., 8 Sept. 1887.

13. Ibid, 26 July 1884.

northern workmen "had a diffidence about anything down south".
 The Mount Nicholas and Cornwall Coal Miners' Association had
 affiliated by the end of the decade.¹⁵ Wharf labourers at
 Devonport were organized by the late eighties and had close
 contacts with the Hobart Council.¹⁶ Amalgamated Miners'
 Association branches were formed at Beaconsfield and Zeehan
 but they had no apparent connections with the movement of
 the capital. Agricultural workers were very conservative.
 Organizers did not disturb the millpond of rural life till
 the first decade of the twentieth century.

The Council was not represented at the second
 Intercolonial Trade Union Congress at Melbourne in 1884.
 At the third congress in Sydney it was represented by two
 Sydney unionists who were given voting instructions. Hugh
 Kirk, the energetic Hobart secretary, attended the congresses
 at Adelaide in 1886 and Brisbane in 1888. Tasmanian delegates
 were present at the Melbourne Eight-hour Day celebrations in
 1889.¹⁷ The following year two unionists attended the
 Intercolonial Conference of Wharf Labourers.¹⁸ The principle
 of inter-colonial co-operation and consultation had been accepted.

14. Speech by Mr McMahon, (Nth. Tas.) at I.T.U.C., Hobart 1889.
T. N., 8 Feb. 1889

15. Official Report of Sixth T.U.C., (Hobt. 1889) p. XV.

16. T.N., 24 Decr. 1889.

17. Ibid, 4 May 1889,

18. Ibid, 18 March. 1889.

On a Saturday evening early in February 1889, delegates to the Sixth Intercolonial Congress arrived in Hobart on the express from Launceston. They were met by local unionists and the procession marched to the music of the Federal Band, from the station to the Town Hall.¹⁹ During the following week delegates discussed motions relating to trade, politics, industrial relations and general objectives. Premier Fysh and members of the ministry attended the Congress banquet and visiting unionists picnicked at Fysh's country house in the Derwent Valley. The Governor, Sir R. G. Hamilton, addressed the Congress and so gave it the seal of vice-regal recognition. A correspondent in the Mercury took strong exception to the Governor's presence at such a gathering.²⁰ A letter in the Launceston Daily Telegraph, said there was no need for combination in Tasmania and claimed that Intercolonial Unionists who had arrived in the colony "for the purpose of strengthening their forces by drawing into their fold the quiet breadwinners of Tasmania", were the most "insidious enemies that (could) possibly enter our gates".²¹ But the workers were already raising their voices in protest and mingling with the fold.

19. Ibid, 4 Feb. 1889.

20. M., 6 Feb. 1889.

21. 11 Feb. 1889.

The Congress had a great impact on Tasmanian unionism, which reached a pinnacle of achievement during the eighteen months between the end of the Congress and the beginning of the Maritime Strike. Before leaving the colony mainland delegates helped organize new unions and re-establish moribund ones. The Working Men's Club 'presented an animated scene' on the Monday following the Congress with every room occupied by meetings. At the end of the month the Council reported that six unions had been established as an immediate result of the Congress.²² Wharf labourers', stonemasons' and bricklayers' unions were revived. Boatmakers; enginedrivers, firemen and cleaners; plasterers; quarrymen; and iron and tin workers; plumbers and gas fitters; all founded societies.²³ By September the builders' labourers were organized.²⁴ In May a Debating Society was established,²⁵ and an Eight Hours Anniversary Committee formed in November began to prepare for a demonstration in the following year.²⁶ On Saturday 5 August a dinner was held in Launceston to celebrate the formation of the Northern Trades and Labour Council. The president reported

22. T. N., 22 Feb. 1889.

23. Ibid, 12 and 14 Feb. 1889.

24. Ibid, 5 Sept. 1889.

25. Ibid, 9 May 1889.

26. Ibid, 15 Novr. 1889.

that six societies with a total membership of 300 were affiliated.²⁷ During December a meeting in Hobart established a Federation of Wharf Labourers' Unions of Hobart, Launceston and Devonport.²⁸ The secretary of the Launceston union said that "Trades Unionism was something new to him; in fact, six months ago, he might say he had not given the matter a thought, and it was not until after the success of the Trades and Labour Congress in Hobart that the working classes seemed to realize their power".²⁹

The successful Congress symbolized the awakening self-consciousness of the Tasmanian labour movement. Hugh Kirk, who believed the working classes "were the chief power in the world", looked forward to the time when Tasmania would be able "to keep pace with the other colonies and the rest of the world, and so hasten the time when the whole of mankind shall be as one whole brotherhood, despots shall cease to rule and wars shall be no more".³⁰ The representatives at the Sydney Congress were instructed to give particular attention to proposals for the federation of Australian labour.³¹

27. D. T., 7 Oct. 1889.

28. T. N., 24 Decr. 1889.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 30 July 1884.

31. Ibid., 5 Sept. 1885.

The Council corresponded with the Knights of Labour Organization in America.³² In 1889 a Relief Committee collected over £300 for the London dock labourers.³³ In a letter to the Tasmanian News the Council called attention "to the fact that most of the political reforms that have taken place in other countries owe their success chiefly to the trades organizations ..."³⁴

The original objectives of the Council were limited to the prevention of strikes and the formation of a board for conciliation between employers and employed. But from the first the Council played an active part in politics. Formed late by mainland standards, it had no established traditions inhibiting political activity. A parliamentary committee was formed in 1885³⁵ and in June of that year the Council urged upon the working classes the necessity of obtaining direct representation in the House of Assembly.³⁶ At the end of the eighties the Council's platform was widened to include the objective of forming an executive "for defending the political rights of the working classes".³⁷

32. Ibid, 4 Novr. 1887.

33. 'Sixth Annual Report of T. & L. C.', T. N., 10 Jan. 1890.

34. T. N., 11 Apl. 1887.

35. Ibid, 16 Novr. 1885.

36. Ibid, 6 June 1885.

37. Walch's Red Book, 1890.

Hugh Kirk stood for West Hobart in the 1886 election and became the colony's first working class political aspirant. The conservative press was scornful. "It is hardly possible", ran a Mercury editorial, "that the electors could return ... Mr Kirk, whose sole merit is that he is able to talk, not very well either, about what he does not in the least understand and in a louder voice than other people".³⁸ But four candidates competed for the working class vote. Kirk ran fourth to the two successful candidates, receiving about one-fifth of the 2,000 votes cast.

The Council worked closely with the Political Reform Association in 1885 and 1886 and gave consistent support to liberal middle class politicians throughout the decade.³⁹ A writer in the Tasmanian News in 1885 suggested the two organizations were "practically merged",⁴⁰ but the Council maintained its separate identity. A number of gentlemen who wished to become members were informed the Council was only composed of delegates from trade societies.⁴¹ The liberal-labour coalition worked well for most of the Fysh Ministry's term of office. Council support strengthened the government and the unions were able to influence legislation. At the

38. 24 July 1886.

39. See above, Ch. III.

40. 11 May 1885.

41. T. N., 16 Novr. 1885.

Intercolonial Congress banquet in 1889, Kirk proposed a toast to the ministry, asking that it be drunk "with enthusiasm... because they were the Trades and Labour Council Ministry".⁴² The alliance was symbolized when, to the horror of conservative Hobartians, Premier Fysh and Kirk 'the agitator' were seen walking arm in arm down Macquarie Street.⁴³

Early in 1884 the Council formed a branch of the Intercolonial Labourers' Protection and Benefit Society.⁴⁴ Later in the year it toyed with the idea of establishing a Co-operative Society, but the plan was never implemented.⁴⁵ In June 1885 the Council negotiated with the Master Bakers for a reduction of hours. The majority 'cheerfully complied' with Council requests while the recalcitrant were boycotted.⁴⁶ Towards the end of the year Council delegates met the Master Printers and agreement was reached on wages, hours and apprentices.⁴⁷ During 1889 a deputation met representatives of the shipowners who tentatively agreed on the formation of a committee to settle industrial disputes.⁴⁸

42. Ibid, 11 Feb. 1889.

43. Letter from Watchman, M., 10 Jan. 1890.

44. 'First Biennial Report, T. & L. C.' 1886. T. N., 8 Feb. 1886.

45. 'First Annual Report of T. & L. C.' 1885. T. N., 10 Jan. 1885.

46. T. N., 6 June 1885, and 1 May. 1885.

47. Ibid, 10 Decr. 1885.

48. T. N., 10 Jan. 1890.

The Trades and Labour Council became one of the most powerful pressure groups in the colony during the eighties.⁴⁹ Controversial issues were raised at Council meetings and deputations interviewed ministers. If satisfaction was not given public meetings were held and petitions presented to Parliament. Numerous Council inspired meetings were held to discuss issues ranging from manhood suffrage and electoral reform to immigration restriction, taxation, protection and meat prices. Before elections the Council enrolled voters. In 1886 committees worked as far afield as the rural districts of Brighton and New Norfolk.⁵⁰ Candidates were invited to state their policies before public meetings organized by the Council. Letters were sent to all unionists urging support for approved candidates.⁵¹ Barriers hedging political power precluded frontal assault but the Council was slowly insinuating itself around them.

The Council was active in municipal politics and closely watched the Public Service. Meetings were held prior to the annual municipal elections and candidates were invited to attend. Kirk stood for the City Council in 1886 but was defeated.⁵² Improvement of water supply, drainage, and

49. See above Chs. Iv. & V.,

50. T. N., 6 Feb. 1886.

51. Ibid, 3 March 1887.

52. Ibid, 11 Decr. 1886.

sewerage in the poorer areas of the city was frequently advocated. Nepotism and inefficiency in the Public Service were exposed. Public works' proposals were scrutinized. Lobbying urged the establishment of Public Service exams. Petitions were prepared seeking elective boards for the Hospital and Technical School. The Council was one of the public's most vigilant watch-dogs. Its criticism from outside the gates of respectability often roused a dozing electorate.

The May 1887 meeting of the Council heard a report from delegates who had met the ministry to discuss the registration of Trade Unions.⁵³ In July the Council urged Attorney General Clark to frame a Bill.⁵⁴ He introduced the second reading of his Trade Union Bill in August. He told his colleagues how a union congress was to be held in Hobart early the following year, and said it would be strange if the mainland delegates discovered that combination was still technically illegal in the colony. The House accepted the Bill after Clark had assured members that unions minimized strikes.⁵⁵ But the Upper House refused to consider the Bill unless accompanying legislation provided wider powers of

53. Ibid, 6 May. 1887.

54. Ibid, 7 July 1887.

55. M., 18 Aug. 1888.

action against strikers.⁵⁶ Industrial trouble at Newcastle and activities of the Shearers' Union had toughened conservative resistance.

A month after the Intercolonial Congress, the Council asked Clark to re-submit the Trade Union Bill.⁵⁷ While introducing the legislation later in the year Clark promised a Bill to amend the laws relating to conspiracy and protection of property. Even with this 'antidote' the Bill had a rough passage through Parliament. It passed the second reading in the Assembly on the Speaker's casting vote. Dr McCall, the member for West Devon, said the fact that such a law did not exist in the colony was something to be proud of.⁵⁸ His remarks, said the Launceston Examiner, expressed the true feeling of a large portion of the community.⁵⁹ The Mercury doubted if even with a Bill "imposing pains and penalties for the acts in which such bodies are prone to indulge, it is desirable to allow them to be established in this colony."⁶⁰

The Council was committed to the encouragement of Tasmanian industry. Agitation for local manufacture of

56. Ibid, 13 Oct. 1888.

57. T. N., 9 March 1889.

58. M., 25 Sept. 1889.

59. 26 Sept. 1889.

60. M., 3 Oct. 1889.

railway rolling stock was successful.⁶¹ Motions favouring protective tariffs were passed in 1885, 1887, and 1889. A campaign was waged against the proposed reciprocal trade treaty with Victoria. The Melbourne Trades Council, acting in concert, put pressure on the Victorian Government and the scheme was permanently shelved.⁶² At the end of the eighties the Hobart Council formed an electoral alliance with the Protection Association but it was short-lived.⁶³ The labour movement wavered in its protectionism. At a Council meeting of October 1887, the representative of the Tanners and Curriers' Society indicated that they had resolved in favour of protection. During discussion the shipwrights' delegate said his society favoured free trade. His motion seeking Council approval of free trade was seconded by the stonemasons' delegate but lost on the show of hands.⁶⁴

"The Council", said Kirk later, "had representatives of the Wharf Labourers' Union, who earned their living to a great extent by shipping in some form or other", they also had representatives of other Societies "who would not conceive how (protection) would possibly help them ... and with all

61. T. N., 10 Jan. 1885.

62. Ibid, 8 Feb. 1886.

63. Ibid, 16 Sept. 1889.

64. Ibid, 6 Oct. 1887.

these conflicting elements they had great difficulty in deciding the question of protection and free trade".⁶⁵

The Council strongly opposed a government scheme of assisted migration initiated in the early eighties. An Immigration Board was set up in 1882 and £10,000 voted for each of the three following years. A public meeting of 1884 condemned the policy of introducing migrants while the labour market was overstocked.⁶⁶ The following year agitation was directed against a grant of £5,000 made to the Board for nominated migration. Public meetings were held and resolutions sent to every member of Parliament. Letters dispatched to the labour movement in England requested the use of every means to prevent migration, described the state of the labour market, and asked that the information be published in all trade and co-operative society reports.⁶⁷ Quarterly letters were sent to England for the next two or three years. At the Adelaide Trade Union Congress, Kirk claimed the Hobart Council had so actively opposed State-aided immigration that the government "was compelled" to abandon the system. But as early as 1884 the majority of politicians were opposed to sponsored migration.⁶⁸

65. Ibid, 16 Sept. 1889.

66. Ibid, 28 June 1884.

67. Ibid, 16 Novr. 1885.

68. Debate on Immigration Bill in H. of A., M., 25 Oct. 1884.

The die was cast well before the Council meetings of 1885. Hostility to a trickle of German migration roused one speaker to demand that the Tasmanian population be a youthful one, "and not the refuse, the worn out physical energies of soul crushed Europe". "Let us try and keep in our midst", he continued, "men who refuse to live under a condition of life which means decline in physical, moral and intellectual energy, like the condition of the mass in Europe, let us have Tasmania for the Tasmanians".⁶⁹ The easy assumption of untarnished purity was perhaps ironical in a colony where thirty years before the chain gang had been an everyday sight.

The threat of Chinese migration whipped up Council activity. Restrictive legislation had been introduced in 1881 but was rejected as an "un-English and uncalled for proposal".⁷⁰ The majority of politicians were apathetic or actually favourable to Chinese labour. There were about 1000 Chinamen in the colony during the eighties.⁷¹ They were concentrated on the North-Eastern tin field where they had ousted white labour. As the employment position deteriorated during the mid-eighties, working class apprehension mounted. The Council urged the introduction of a poll tax in June 1887.⁷² A deputation to the government was unsatisfactory, ministers opposing any

69. T. N., 20 Oct. 1885.

70. M., 2 Jan. 1882.

71. Coghlan, T.A., op.cit. III, p.1329.

72. T. N., 2 June 1887.

restriction other than increased opium duties.⁷³ The Council called a public meeting and Ministers attended. In a letter to Henry Parkes at the end of 1887 Premier Fysh said he thought the Chinese a law-abiding and industrious people, whose presence "would be courted, were it not that they are regarded by the labouring classes as undesirable competitors in the struggle for existence".⁷⁴ Clark introduced a poll-tax Bill in September which passed after a difficult passage through the Legislative Council.

In the eighties Tasmanian unionism manifested little of the radical nationalism which coloured the movements in New South Wales and Queensland. At a meeting of the Trades and Labour Debating Society in 1889, Mr Kalbfell, the secretary of the Boatmakers' Society, moved for discussion of republicanism.⁷⁵ But the topic was too exotic to rouse much interest and the debate was apparently never held. The Council was indifferent to issues like the Imperial Conference, the dispatch of the Sudan contingent, the Australian Naval Force Bill, and Imperial Federation, which raised the ire of mainland radicals.

73. 'Report of Tasmanian Parliamentary Committee', Official Record of I.T.U.C., Brisbane, 1888. (Brisbane 1888).

74. Quoted in Coghlan, T.A., op.cit. III, p.1329.

75. T. N., 29 Aug. 1889.

Delegates to the Hobart Intercolonial Congress were practically unanimous in wishing the friendship of labour and capital and believing their interests were identical.

Tasmanian unionists were generally more conservative than their mainland colleagues. Industry was embryonic, establishments small, and contact between employer and worker close. Many employers had risen from wage-earning ranks. Many workers hoped to emulate their social advancement. A large body of skilled tradesmen felt themselves closer to the bosses than to the unskilled. On the whole the eighties were marked by industrial peace.

But by the end of the decade the mood was slowly changing. During discussion on profit sharing at the Hobart Congress, Kirk asked, "Why should not large firms be taken over, and the employers' money ... and thus make all prosperous?"⁷⁶ The movement felt the magnetic attraction of Henry George. Kirk moved in favour of a tax on unimproved land values at the 1886 Intercolonial Congress.⁷⁷ In 1887 the Council invited George to Tasmania,⁷⁸ At a Debating Society meeting of 1889 a member suggested all land "should belong to (the) colony in perpetuity ... Let the government

76. Ibid, 4 Feb. 1889.

77. Ibid, 16 Sept. 1886.

78. Ibid, 4 Novr. 1887.

lease the land, and in future the only taxes required would be the rent of the land. Customs duties could be abolished, and general prosperity would ensue".⁷⁹ Radical ideas were enticing the labour movement along untrodden ways.

1890 opened auspiciously for the unions. The first Eight Hour Day demonstration was held on 25 January. Premier Fysh, who was patron of the Eight Hour day committee, granted a holiday and employers provided transport and equipment. During the morning the Garrison Band led the procession of decorated floats from the Working Men's Club to the Tasmanian Cricket Association ground. 'United we stand-divided we fall' slogans were prominent. At the conclusion of the afternoon's athletic sports, G. P. Fitzgerald presented trophies and publicly apologized for voting against the Eight Hours Bill during the previous year.⁸⁰ A Council meeting in March unanimously favoured the federation of labour in Australia.⁸¹ Towards the end of the month a new society of mill-hands, carters and labourers was formed.⁸² With thirty-two delegates the Council represented sixteen trade societies.⁸³

79. Ibid, 12 Sept. 1889.

80. Ibid, 26 Jan. 1890.

81. Ibid, 8 March 1890.

82. Ibid, 5 April 1890.

83. Walch's Red Book, 1890 and 1891.

The Liberal Fysh Ministry was still in office and Parliament accepted payment of members during the year. At the April meeting the Council promised unanimous and unequivocal support for Fysh's current election campaign.⁸⁴ Early in August a deputation met the Premier and discussed the need of legislation for employers' liability, factory inspection and mining regulations. Watching labour advances, Hobart employers formed a union, "not in opposition to the labour unions directly, but for protecting their own interests as employers and producers".⁸⁵

Late in 1889 Hugh Kirk was sacked for collecting funds for the London dockers during working hours.⁸⁶ On 20 January 1890 Fysh's government appointed him Clerk of Works superintending the construction of the Ulverstone Post Office.⁸⁷ Two years later he was charged with having, on 11 January 1890, forged an order for the payment of thirty pounds from the Sydney branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.⁸⁸ He was convicted and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. During his seven years at the helm of the Trades and Labour Council, Kirk worked assiduously

84. T. N., 5 April 1890.

85. Ibid, 3 Oct. 1889.

86. Ibid, 12 May 1892.

87. J. & P. of P., XIX 1890.

88. T. N., 12 May 1892.

for the passage of the Trade Union Bill which for the first time gave the unions power to proceed against pilfering officials. He played his final role in Tasmanian labour history as the first person brought to justice under . legislation he had done so much to achieve.

After routine business had been disposed with, ⁸⁹ the August meeting of the Trades and Labour Council discussed a letter from the Amalgamated Shearers Union of Australia appealing for help in difficulties expected with the wool-growers. The Council was sympathetic and pledged its support in every possible way.⁸⁹ By the end of the month the whole Australian union movement was wilting. The storm centre was far from Tasmanian shores, but ripples reaching the island were sufficiently strong to cripple local union organization.

On 20 August a meeting of the Launceston wharf labourers decided to follow the lead of mainland unionists, "so that if they struck the local union would do likewise".⁹⁰ Two days later they refused to bag coal in the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company's yard for the S. S. 'Devon'. But work proceeded with non-union labour.⁹¹ On 26 August a large crowd watched free labour unload the S. S. 'Flinders'.

89. Ibid, 3 Aug. 1890.

90. Ibid, 21 Aug. 1890.

91. Ibid, 23 Aug. 1890.

Unionists groaned, their opponents cheered, but a large posse of police prevented any violence.⁹² On 30 August a Strike Relief Fund was formed and strike pay distributed.⁹³ The following day a unionist was fined five pounds for assaulting a company official.⁹⁴ The secretary of the Launceston Union travelled to Melbourne seeking financial assistance but he returned empty handed. The Hobart water front was quiet till

September⁸ when the S. S. 'Monowai', the first vessel to enter the port with a non-union crew, berthed at Argyle Street pier. She had been expected early in the morning and by the evening a large crowd had gathered. Unionists stood "sullen and defiant", refusing to secure the ropes. The following morning non-union labour came forward and work commenced. Clerks from merchant houses in white shirts and high collars unloaded a cargo of coal.⁹⁵ The S. S. 'Oonah' was worked by non-unionist three days later.⁹⁶ The strike lingered for a few weeks. But the unions were small and poor and non-union labour was abundant. By the end of October the men had slunk back to work.

92. Ibid, 27 Aug. 1890.

93. L. E., 31 Aug. 1890.

94. Ibid, 2 Sept. 1890.

95. M., 9 Sept. 1890.

96. Ibid, 12 Sept. 1890.

A Tasmanian News editorial of 20 August said the majority of Tasmanians were beginning to fear the financial consequences of the strike. Two days later a meeting of merchants and commercial leaders in Hobart considered the consequences of a possible interruption of shipping services.⁹⁷ Prices of necessities were already rising. Meat was becoming scarce in Hobart and in Launceston the price of flour was up fifteen shillings to one pound a ton.⁹⁸ The editor of the Launceston Examiner said the time had arrived to teach labour a lesson and suggested that working men should become employers themselves.⁹⁹ In the Hobart Tabernacle, Pastor McCulloch claimed wages were determined by natural laws and said St Paul's exhortation 'Servants obey in all things your masters', never had greater relevance.¹⁰⁰ Letters condemning the strikes flooded the papers. An 'Old Resident' suggested that pay should cease all over Australia within twenty-four hours of a strike being called anywhere on the continent.¹⁰¹ 'Bengal Blend' claimed the time had come for all governments to unite in suppressing the revolutionary tide.¹⁰²

97. Ibid, 23 Aug. 1890.

98. T. N., 21 Aug. 1890, and M., 22 Aug. 1890.

99. 26 Aug. 1890.

100. M., 1 Sept. 1890.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid, 23 Aug. 1890.

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99. 26 Aug. 1890.

100. M., 1 Sept. 1890.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid, 23 Aug. 1890.

'Freeman', who had subscribed to the Benevolent Society 'upwards of thirty years', was determined never to donate another shilling if the committee assisted distressed strikers or their wives and children.¹⁰³ Henry Nicholls struck a ^{deep} profounder chord. He concluded "that the short era of laissez faire has finally closed, never to be opened again. We are face to face with a new state of affairs. We have new problems to solve. Laissez faire has broken down".¹⁰⁴

Early in September a meeting of 'employers, pastoralists, and capitalists' formed an Employers' Union in Launceston. William Hart, the mining magnate, opened discussion saying that he was not against men joining unions as long as they didn't interfere with the liberty of the subject and the "capitalists' interests". He trusted no compromise would be reached without securing the capitalist's right to conduct business according to "his own wishes untrammelled by Trade Unionism".¹⁰⁵ A similar meeting was held at Hobart in the middle of the month. G. P. Fitzgerald and Edward Ivey suggested that no association be formed avowedly hostile to labour organizations. But their amendment was rejected.¹⁰⁶

103. L. E., 26 Aug. 1890.

104. M., 10 Sept. 1890.

105. L. E., 3 Sept. 1890.

106. T. N., 16 Sept. 1890.

Employers emerged from the troubles of 1890 with conviction and determination, unified as never before. Unionists were disillusioned and less organized than they had been since that summer evening in November 1883 when the Trades and Labour Council was founded.

Many Tasmanian unionists were shocked by the forces unleashed in the Maritime Strike. Few skilled tradesmen had been aware of the nature of the new mass unionism. In September 1890 the Hobart Council deplored "the unlawful tactics pursued by some Trade Unionists".¹⁰⁷ The Launceston Council thought the men "too hasty in the action they had taken".¹⁰⁸ The Mercury reported that even staunch unionists believed matters were "being carried too far".¹⁰⁹ Living in small communities, the men were exposed to the full force of social opprobrium. The Anglican Church called for the stamping out of socialism, which it claimed was synonymous with Russian nihilism, French communism, and other godless philosophies.¹¹⁰ Social, political and commercial leaders condemned the strikers. The mayor of Launceston called them madmen.¹¹¹ Every newspaper was anti-strike. The more hysterical

107. Ibid, 4 Sept. 1890.

108. D. T., 29 Sept. 1890.

109. 25 Aug. 1890.

110. C. N., 1 Oct. 1890.

111. L. E., 3 Sept. 1890.

editorials coupled socialism with drunkenness, misery, and crime. For many, unionism had been as much a medium of social advancement as a method of securing political power. Social acceptance, sedulously cultivated for a decade, was in jeopardy. The timorous were cowed into conservative resignation; the more militant forced onward to a defiant radicalism.

The impact of the Strike was not immediately apparent. The Council was active before and during the 1891 election. City electorates were canvassed and several hundred names added to the rolls.¹¹² A mild platform was drawn up and sent to candidates for comment.¹¹³ Liberal politicians were supported in three city and two suburban electorates. Two months after the strike a meeting in Launceston, between northern and southern Councils and representatives of Fingal miners and Devonport wharf labourers, passed resolutions favouring amalgamation, and arrangements were made for the formation of a central executive.¹¹⁴ But this was an echo of the past rather than a presage of the future. The tide of events had turned against the Councils and their ideals.

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112. T. N., 3 Sept. 1890.

113. Ibid, 15 March 1891.

114. Ibid, 22 Dec. 1890.

TOWARDS MATURITY.

Early in 1891 business was recovering from disruptions caused by the Maritime Strike and there were indications of returning prosperity. But on 2 August³ the Van Diemen's Land Bank closed its doors. The directors had acted on the assumption that the Zeehan silver field would "prove not only one but a whole province of Broken Hills".¹¹⁵ Individuals were ruined. The mining industry was severely jolted. The island's internal trade was retarded and the money market tightened. But the bank crash was only a portent of the depression of the following years. Markets closed, trade dwindled, wages fell and employment evaporated. Public revenue fell from £800,000 in 1891 to £690,000 in 1894. Between 1892 and 1895 expenditure declined from £920,000 to £750,000. Customs receipts shrank by a quarter and the value of imports slid from £2,000,000 to £980,000 between 1891 and 1894.¹¹⁶ The government severely curtailed its public works schemes and retrenched in every department. Between 1891 and 1894 the average wage of artisans and labourers fell by 8s.6d. per week.¹¹⁷ Workers with continuous employment were hard hit. Those without suffered considerably.

115. Dairy of G. B. Walker, 23 April 1893.

116. Statistical Summary of Tasmania, op.cit.

117. S. of T., 1894.

"We do not wish to suggest", said a Tasmanian News editorial, "that we have within the city...masses of wretched people, but we have our poor, and ... for some time past they have been considerably augmented".¹¹⁸ In May 1892 the Trades and Labour Council estimated that between 300 and 400 men were seeking employment.¹¹⁹ During the winter of 1893 there were 330 registered unemployed in Hobart and about 200 in Launceston.¹²⁰ Conditions reached their nadir in the winter of 1894. The official Catholic paper estimated that between 500 and 800 were out of work in April.¹²¹ In September the Clipper put the figure at between 600 and 700.¹²² In Launceston during August 302 were unemployed and 165 on relief work.¹²³ Months of privation had taken savings and household goods.¹²⁴ Destitution was haunting many homes. In his address to Synod that year, Bishop Montgomery said that until recently he had never seen a beggar in Hobart, but was shocked "on the day when a child for the first time begged on (him) in the streets..".¹²⁵

118. 22 April 1892.

119. T. N., 5 May 1892.

120. T. D., 17 June 1893, and Cl., 10 June 1893.

121. Mo., 14 April 1894.

122. 28 Sept. 1894.

123. T. D., 18 Aug. 1894.

124. Mo., 14 April 1894.

125. C. N., 1 May 1894.

Help was extended to the unemployed from a number of sources. A committee of politicians and labour leaders formed an employment bureau in Hobart during 1893.¹²⁶ A similar organization was established in Launceston.¹²⁷ The Benevolent Society was active. In one week in 1895 relief was given to 1300 people.¹²⁸ A committee of ladies, led by Mrs Henry Dobson the Premier's wife, ran a soup kitchen and relief restaurant during the winter of 1893.¹²⁹ The following year the tireless Mrs Dobson formed a committee to establish a village settlement. The government granted land at Southport and gave financial assistance. Co-operative methods were tried but proved unsatisfactory. In April 1895 a ballot for allotments was held among the sixty-odd settlers. But the settlement was never self-sufficient and was abandoned in 1898.¹³⁰

Governmental aid was too little and too late. Lingering laissez faire doctrines inhibited action. A deputation which met the Minister of Lands and Works in September 1892 was told the government did not "intend to grapple

126. Cl., 3 June 1893.

127. T. D., 17 June 1893.

128. T. N., 16 Aug. 1895.

129. M., 30 Dec. 1893.

130. Coghlan, T.A., op.cit., IV, pp.2084-5.

with the labour question".¹³¹ By 1893 both the government and City Council were providing relief work. But there was never enough and pay was meagre. As distress deepened during 1894 large meetings of unemployed were held in Hobart and Launceston. In July a petition was presented to Parliament asking leave for the radical Reverend Archibald Turnbull to speak at the bar of the House. One thousand men marched to Parliament House. The Hobart Brass band headed the procession followed by a hastily improvised banner depicting the figures of a 'monopolisitic fat man' holding a bludgeon marked 'law and order', towering over a labourer, who "with feet chained was cracking stones at three bob a day". In the background was the rising sun of labour representation.¹³² Inside the House the motion was debated and rejected by nineteen votes to nine. A Select Committee was later set up but little action followed its findings. A motion passed in August, asserted the need for an efficient government labour bureau. But the situation had eased by the end of the year and the plan was shelved. The editor of the Clipper summarized labour sentiments when he complained that the government had "studiously...emulated the example of the worst form of

131. T.N., 29 Sep 1892.

132. Cl., 14 July, 1894.

government by merely acting as tax gatherers and ... cutting down the wages to a starvation rate ... that not only disfranchises a man, but renders it absolutely impossible for him to clothe, educate and feed his family".¹³³

The social tempests of the early nineties broke through the walls of parochialism and complacency that had shielded many corners of Tasmanian life. A considerable part of the Bishop's address to the 1891 Synod was devoted to social problems. The Anglican Church News saw great social changes impending and suggested that socialism was a subject churchmen ought to study and think about.¹³⁴

In his synodal address of 1894 the Bishop asked why the rich attended church and the poor stayed away. He told the clergy to study sociology and get in touch with the masses.¹³⁵ In February 1895 a cathedral congregation was informed that "like a rising tide on a low shore, Socialism has so imperceptibly, yet suddenly, come round us and closed us in that we are taken unawares and cannot escape".¹³⁶

The outlook of the Catholic Church was considerably affected. The Catholic Standard, the official paper of the

133. Ibid, 29 Sept. 1894.

134. 1 May 1891.

135. C. N., 1 May 1894.

136. Ibid, 1 March 1895.

eighties and nineties was non-political. But two days before the Van Diemen's Land Bank crash it published the first section of the official translation of *Rerum Novarum*. New doctrines, social distress, and Irish traditions merged in a stream of radicalism. Coadjutor Bishop Patrick Delaney thought the strikes "wild, rough and untutored protest(s) against greed which denies justice, and legalized and privileged strength which refuses concession and conciliation".¹³⁷ A new paper, the Monitor, was published on April 7, 1894. The editor promised its politics would be essentially democratic. During the next few years it advocated Shop and Factory Acts, co-operative societies, the referendum and many other advanced social reforms. The socialist plan to nationalize the instruments of production and "thereby putting an end to the individual capitalist", was, it said, "a perfectly legitimate one".¹³⁸

Pondering over the causes of depression many Tasmanians concluded that land tenure was at fault. The first deputation to wait on the Minister of Lands suggested the land monopoly should be broken.¹³⁹ The first issue of the Monitor admitting its Irish sentiments, alluded to the land question

137. Quoted in Mo., 8 Sept. 1894.

138. 7 Oct. 1889.

139. T. N., 29 Sept. 1892.

as the very root of the social inrest of the period. Throughout 1894 a series of editorials discussed land taxation, landlordism, credit for selectors, and the unlocking of large estates for closer settlement. Land nationalization was the subject of innumerable letters in the press during the early nineties. R. M. Johnston and A. J. Ogilvie delivered papers on the subject to the Royal Society in July 1892.¹⁴⁰ It was debated by the Tasmanian Literary and Debating Union in September 1893.¹⁴¹ After mass at Deloraine in May 1894, the Reverend J. Murphy, having taken off his sacred vestments, launched an attack on landlordism. His ideal of a just and equitable system, he said, was "the scheme known as Land Nationalization".¹⁴² The Baptist Day Star advocated the establishment of a class of yeoman farmers whose character would be purified by the beauties of nature, quiet meditation, pure air and the "healthy exercise of turning up the soil". "A million godly people settled upon farms", it claimed, would make the island "a place to be desired, and would present a picture of a land basking in the sunshine of heaven's smile".¹⁴³

140. M., 14 July 1892.

141. T. N., 9 Sept. 1893.

142. Mo., 19 May 1894.

143. 9 Sept. 1893.

On Saturday, 26 October 1891, Tasmania's first labour paper was sold on the streets of Launceston. The weekly Tasmanian Democrat described itself as the fearless, outspoken and independent peoples paper. "The great citadel of capitalism", said the first editorial, "must be razed to the ground, and upon the ruins thereof will arise a nobler and grander structure". It called for complete nationalization of land and capital and obliteration of all class distinctions. Lectures by Sydney Webb and quotations from Bellamy, George and Marx were printed. Like the Bulletin it was republican, looking forward to the creation of the Australian Democratic Republic. Early in 1893 the manager, John Rich, resigned to devote his full time to organize for Lane's New Australia movement. The paper changed hands several times during the next few years but the extreme radicalism passed with its founder. At the end of the decade it was incorporated in the Federalist which did not survive to report the consummation of its main objective.

The Hobart labour weekly, the Clipper, outlived its northern contemporary. First published on 8 April 1893, it was superseded by the Daily Post in 1909. Its founder, James Paton, edited the paper till after the turn of the century.

Modelled on the Bulletin, it was red-covered, radical, and republican. Short hard-hitting paragraphs and novel metaphors ridiculed the status quo. Less emphatically left wing than Rich's Tasmanian Democrat, it was tinged with Christian Socialism. Business manager E. J. Paton believed he was advancing the cause of "that greatest of agitators and reformers who began it nearly nineteen centuries ago".¹⁴⁴

The labour weeklies fanned the discontent which developed during the depression. At a meeting of unemployed in September 1893 a speaker said that bad conditions had caused many workers to think the lands and mines should be nationalized.¹⁴⁵ The editor of the Tasmanian News feared that some of the working class had come to believe that capital was the natural enemy of labour.¹⁴⁶ A wedge of distrust was pushed between working class movement and middle class politician. It was felt that Parliament represented class interests and was not concerned with the welfare of the worker. Poverty, high rents, and food prices, low wages and unemployment, were imputed to the machinations of bad legislators.¹⁴⁷ "By Bitter experience", said the Clipper

144. T. D., 29 Jan 1897.

145. T. N., 13 Sept. 1893.

146. Ibid, 11 Sept. 1895.

147. See reports of meetings, T. N., 9, 13 Sept. 1893.

"we have learned that little can be expected from the old school of politicians ... The very class to whom the workers had always looked for the supply of statesmen and leaders..."¹⁴⁸

The Trades and Labour Council also came under fire. In giving his reasons for breaking with the Council, a labour leader said it seemed to be inhibiting the growth of working class consciousness. The Tasmanian News suggested that members needed reminding of the Council's potential power and criticized their almost exclusive concern with routine matters and sports. By the end of 1892 six of the Hobart unions had collapsed or disaffiliated. Two years later only four remained. In Launceston the Typographical Society alone survived the depression.¹⁴⁹ During 1892 and 1893 the Hobart Council held unemployment meetings and led deputations to Ministers. In 1895 striking Mt Nicholas miners appealed for assistance, but the Council was quite impotent. A Clipper editorial remarked that the small bodies surviving "the almost universal discredit of old unionism have mostly sunk into a degraded state of decrepitude".¹⁵⁰

The Eight Hour Day was celebrated until 1895. In 1892 Wirth's circus joined the procession. The troupe appeared

148. 11 April 1896.

149. Walch's Red Book, 1892 - 1895.

150. 15 June 1895.

in full dress, the clowns kept the spectators in ecstasies and the cowboys attracted attention by lasooing policemen.¹⁵¹ By the following year unemployment had thinned the line of marchers. Many of the crowd could remember walking in the ranks, but "now pondered over the empty cupboard problem and the bold legend 'United we stand; divided we fall', which once seemed so full of glorious truth, and rang so loudly from the lips of ardent leaders, and which (now) seemed rather bald on its stretch of white calico ...".¹⁵² In 1895 the procession had been further whittled away and once again the majority of workers were onlookers.¹⁵³ James Paton thought it a tawdry pagaent. The Mercury reporter described it as an "eloquent epitaph".¹⁵⁴ There was no demonstration in 1896. The Council finally collapsed early in 1897.

A combination of union organization and reliance on liberal middle class politicians had been the cornerstone of labour policy in the eighties. But strikes brought defeat and distress and politicians proved unreliable. Strikes were

151. T. N., 11 Feb. 1892.

152. M., 8 March 1894.

153. Cl., 9 March 1895.

154. 7 March 1895.

discredited. Labour should now 'win its liberty at the ballot boxes'. With combination and solidarity working men could enter parliament and 'rout out the men at present in power'. The more advanced Tasmanian labour groups came to these conclusions early in the nineties. But there was a long lag between aspiration and realization. The movement was numerically and financially weak. Working class conservatism was rampant. The great mass of unskilled labour had never been organized, while the old skilled-trade based unions were broken and discredited. Rural labour was politically backward. The miners did not become a force till the end of the century. Among urban workers were deep personal and ideological differences. Between 1892 and 1903 Hobart had four working class political organizations before a permanent one was created.

On 21 September, 1892, a Labour Electoral League was formed in Hobart. Committees were set up and during the next two months voters were enrolled in each city electorate.¹⁵⁵ Fortnightly meetings were held and deputations questioned ministers on the growing unemployment problem. James Hall, the League's founder, had been a prominent radical since the

155. Cl., 2 Novr. 1892.

early eighties. For years he had harangued Sunday crowds on the Domain and New Wharf. He was republican, free thinking, and bible damning. He had been secretary of the Seamen's Union and a member of the Trades and Labour Council. After the strike he spurned the Council and tried to divert the movement along political channels. But Hall had a capacity for making enemies and for several years the Hobart labour movement was split into pro-and anti-Hall factions.

At the beginning of May 1893 a Workers' Political Association was formed.¹⁵⁶ The initiators were Trades and Labour Council members and personal foes of James Hall. The first meeting drafted a programme including progressive land taxes, the referendum, state banks, and the exclusion of coloured labour. "What hope," asked the Clipper, "can ¹⁵⁷ two bodies with the reverse of good feeling have of prospering?" Relations between the two were rancorous. During September both held meetings on the same night. Members of the Workers' Political Association were asked to explain their presence at rival gatherings.¹⁵⁸ A Clipper article addressed to Hall, claimed 'Hallism' had become a religion, that his "aggressive

156. Ibid, 6 May, 1893.

157. Ibid, 13 May 1893.

158. T. N., 29 Sept. 1893.

egotism" was destroying the labour movement.¹⁵⁹ Every Sunday he abused his opponents from a Domain soap box.¹⁶⁰ The Labour Electoral League nominated him for North Hobart in the 1893 elections. The Workers' Political Association and Trades and Labour Council campaigned against him and he was defeated. He 'roundly rated' his opponents and left soon after for New Zealand and was last heard of on the South African gold fields.¹⁶¹

At a crowded meeting of the unemployed in June 1894 proposals for the formation of a Liberal and Labour Electoral League were enthusiastically carried and an organizing committee was formed.¹⁶² A second meeting the following week adopted a platform including adult suffrage, abolition of the Upper House, unimproved land value taxation, and compulsory arbitration.¹⁶³ The League was active for about two years. Meetings, processions, and deputations of unemployed were organized. A campaign was waged for extension of the franchise. The League had 600 or 700 members in October 1895.¹⁶⁴

159. Cl., 4 Novr. 1893.

160. T. D., 7 Oct. 1893.

161. Ibid, 25 Oct. 1895.

162. Cl., 21 July 1894.

163. Ibid, 28 July 1894.

164. Ibid, 28 Sept. 1895.

The visit of Michael Davitt in July was hailed as marking an epoch in the labour movement. But it kindled only transient enthusiasm. Recounting his Tasmanian sojourn, Davitt said, "he was told that the workingmen of Hobart were particularly apathetic on the subject of labour organization...(and) are reputed to be of a very subdued disposition...".¹⁶⁵

Archibald Turnbull, the radical Anglican parson, was secretary-treasurer of the League. Throughout 1894 and 1895 he addressed meetings and delivered sermons from the pulpit of the Mariners' Chapel.¹⁶⁶ But his demagogic radicalism embarrassed the Anglican hierarchy and the Bishop withdrew his licence to preach.¹⁶⁷ Turnbull retaliated by telling a public meeting that the Church in Tasmania was "ruled and overridden by one man". He treated his audience to "one of the saddest stories which could be told by a man to fellowmen". "His life story of persecution", he said, had begun when his first wife eloped with the secretary of his Church eighteen years before.¹⁶⁸ Turnbull also came into conflict with a section of the labour movement, and took umbrage

165. Davitt, M., Life and Progress in Australia, (Lond.1898) p.325

166. Cl., 15 Feb. 1896.

167. Ibid, 16 May 1896.

168. Ibid, 1 June 1895.

when excluded from the executive of the newly formed Democratic Club. In May 1896 the Clipper devoted two columns to attacking the hapless clergyman. His head, the article said, had swollen to "elephantine proportion". It explained that individualism meant ratting and rejoiced that democracy would be put upon its proper basis as a secular movement.¹⁶⁹ A week later the Labour and Liberal Political League asked for Turnbull's resignation.¹⁷⁰ He moved to Melbourne, opened an independent 'labour' Church, performed unorthodox marriage services which didn't require the wife to promise obedience to her husband, and became a regular Yarra-bank orator.¹⁷¹

A meeting in the Clipper office on 13 April 1896 decided that the Political League and Trades and Labour Council should, for political purposes, be merged into the Democratic Club.¹⁷² Members were "chiefly of the working classes" whose object was to "put men forward in Parliament to have the masses' grievances properly represented".¹⁷³ Three months later a conference of democrats was arranged, including members of the Club, representatives from Launceston and Zeehan, and several liberal politicians.¹⁷⁴ The ensuing Democratic League of Tasmania

169. Ibid, 16 May 1896.

170. Ibid, 23 May 1896.

171. Ibid, 12 and 19 Novr. 1898.

172. Ibid, 18 April 1896.

173. Letter from Henry Dobbs, T. N., 13 May 1896.

174. Ibid, 18 July 1896.

issued the fullest and most radical platform that had been drawn up in the colony. It included state-endowed age pensions, Factory Acts for the prevention of sweating, graduated income tax, the referendum, compulsory early closing of business houses, a state bank, and rent fixing.¹⁷⁵ At the end of July land nationalization was adopted, A. J. Ogilvie became President, and proposals were accepted for Colony-wide organization.¹⁷⁶

In January 1897 the League endorsed Clipper editor Paton for a North Hobart bye election. As usual there was a redundancy of 'working men's' candidates, and he was defeated. The following month the League began organizing for the elections to the Federal Convention. It adopted a Federal platform which included adult suffrage, elective ministries, direct initiation of legislation by the electorate, exclusion of 'undesirable aliens' and election of Governors, judges, and magistrates.¹⁷⁷ Paton, Ogilvie, and three radical M. H. A.s were endorsed but were all defeated. During the year regular meetings and debates were held. Relief work was carried out among the residue of unemployed, and working class voters were enrolled. Agitation was waged for the total exclusion of the Chinese. A Clipper editorial said that while "the universal brotherhood doctrine

175. Ibid.

176. Ibid, 1 Aug. 1896.

177. Ibid, 6 Feb. 1897.

is a noble doctrine - race preservation is nobler".¹⁷⁸

Early in 1899 employment in Tasmania was offered to several hundred Austrians who had been working as indentured labour in New Zealand. The Democratic League reacted immediately the fact was made public. Three meetings were held and Braddon was forced to intervene and exclude the Austrians. An Alien-Exclusion League was formed and fifty members joined. Austrians, said the Clipper, "have the habits of a Chinaman, the cleanliness of a pig and can live on the smell of an oil rag".¹⁷⁹

Ben Tillett, the radical leader of London's dock workers, was in Hobart during the last week of February 1898. His speeches, "the most logical, fearless and telling ... heard in Tasmania on the labour question" ^a "stimulated/burst of activity. At the beginning of March the Tasmanian Worker's Union was formed.¹⁸⁰ Intended to embrace all wage earners, its platform included conciliation and arbitration, protection from high rent and food prices, cooperative enterprise for unemployed, and the gradual replacement of the wage system by industrial cooperation. Meetings were held during the following few months but the Union soon collapsed. Conservatism,

* 179. Ibid, 4 Feb. 1899.

180. Ibid, 12 March. 1898.

* 178. Ibid 11 Sept. 1897.

jealousies, and fear vitiated such an ambitious project. A waterside workers' union, founded after Tillett's visit, was opposed to the idea of an all inclusive union.¹⁸¹ While reminiscing on conditions in Hobart during 1900, Stephen Baker, a Victorian organizer, said that men were too afraid of dismissal to join a union.¹⁸² In 1899 the Democratic League reformed the builders' labourers', tailors' and bakers' unions.¹⁸³ An attempt was made to refloat the foundered Trades and Labour Council during 1900.¹⁸⁴ But a central union organization was not re-established till 1909.

Paton's electoral campaigns of 1899 and 1900 were the culmination of League activities. In January 1899 a series of street meetings were held and a large working committee canvassed the electorate. But Paton was defeated, gaining just under 600 votes.¹⁸⁵ A vigorous campaign was waged prior to the 1900 general elections. Paton, however, was pro-Boer and took an uncompromising stand against the war. His slender hopes of success were buried under an avalanche of jingoism. On 19 January W. A. Holman delivered from

181. Ibid, 26 March 1898.

182. D. P., 12 Jan. 1911.

183. Cl., 14 Oct. 1899.

184. Ibid, 31 March 1900.

185. Ibid, 21 Jan. and 18 Feb. 1899.

Paton's platform a lecture on militarism and the labour movement. After twenty minutes the meeting was broken up by sailors from an English ship, and local ruffians. Holman was knocked to the floor and pinioned by two sailors. As he was escorted from the hall he was punched in the back of the neck. The conservative press approved the disruption of the meeting as an expression of laudable patriotism. Paton's subsequent meetings ended in uproar. He was unable to get anyone to preside or to move and second resolutions. Few of the audience dared applaud for fear of being branded as Boer sympathisers.¹⁸⁶ On election eve Paton withdrew, doubting "whether the jingoistic present is the opportune time for a Democratic advance".¹⁸⁷

A Progressive Liberal Association was formed in Launceston at the end of 1893.¹⁸⁸ Leadership came from middle class liberals and survivors from the wreck of the Trades and Labour Council. More moderate than similar bodies in Hobart, its platform included manhood suffrage, abolition of plural voting, and land taxes. Its wider social base and milder objectives enabled it to gain electoral success denied the Hobart groups. Allan McDonald, small retailer and staunch liberal, was elected in 1893 after strong Association support. With the

186. Stephen Baker in D. P., 12 Jan. 1911.

187. Cl., 3 March 1900.

188. T. D., 25 Nov. 1893.

Trades and Labour Council remnant, Association members worked among the unemployed, finding work and organizing meetings and deputations. A Democratic League branch was formed in 1896. Ten candidates were endorsed for the Federal Convention election, but were all defeated. Ronald Smith, editor of the Tasmanian Democrat, was successfully supported in the 1897 election. But despite these partial successes the labour movement was weak in Launceston. Unionism had gained but a precarious foothold before the Maritime Strike and the workers were traditionally conservative.

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EXUBERANCE IN THE WEST.

In his Labour and Industry in Australia, Coghlan claimed that the "coming of large numbers of miners to Tasmania "changed the whole aspect of political life, control of which"gradually passed from ... the native born element ... a highly conservative body, to the democratic section now largely enforced by new arrivals"¹⁸⁹. But the mining communities had little influence till the turn of the century when many democratic victories had already been won. During the eighties centres like Beaconsfield, Waratah and Lefroy were politically apathetic. The men were apparently well satisfied with conservative middle class representation. Meetings at Beaconsfield and Waratah in 1884 urged franchise reduction and Waratah boasted a Labour League for a few months. However these sporadic stirrings were exceptional, and only in the nineties, with the rapid development of the West Coast, did conditions begin really to change.

Eleven years after Philosopher Smith's strike at Mount Bischoff a prospector discovered rich silver in the forests around Mount Zeehan, fifty miles south of Waratah.

189. IV,p. 1950.

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189. IV, p. 1950.

For a number of the years the field remained undeveloped. But during the Broken Hill boom excited investors poured money into Zeehan. By the middle of 1888 twenty-five syndicates were prospecting the district. Three years later 159 companies and syndicates had leases at Zeehan and Dundas. Silver ore was found over an area of thirty miles. The Hobart Mercury predicted the coast would rival the great silver mines of Mexico and Peru. As excitement reached a pitch the Hobart stock exchange remained open all night and share prices spiralled.¹⁹⁰ At Zeehan brokers and speculators stood about the main street all day. At night hotels held open exchanges and large quantities of scrip changed hands. Almost everyone dabbled in speculation.¹⁹¹ On 14 October 1890 the first issue of the Zeehan and Dundas Herald was printed. A year later 3,500 people had flocked to the town. By 1899 Zeehan, with 6,000 people, was one-third the size of Hobart.¹⁹²

In July 1891 the Mount Lyell Gold Mining Company was dissolved. The field which had supported 200 diggers was abandoned. But early the following year a group of wealthy

190. Blainey, G., The Peaks of Lyell, op.cit. pp. 48-9.

191. Tilley, H., The Wild West of Tasmania, (Melb.1891) p.29.

192. Blainey, G., The Peaks of Lyell, op.cit. p. 89.

mainland investors began to explore the vast low grade copper deposits which the original owners had ignored. During the next few years the mine was explored by miles of tunnels, drives and crosscuts. With the ore body proven, development pushed vigorously ahead. In the summer of 1894 the island's unemployed flocked to construction camps where 500 men were building the Mount Lyell railway. During February 1896, 500 workers were constructing smelters near the mine. On Thursday 25 June the first molten copper poured from the new furnaces. When in the following year the smelters were officially opened before a crowd of official guests from Melbourne and Hobart, the Zeehan and Dundas Herald called Mount Lyell "the greatest mining property known today in the Australias". Three pound Lyell shares rose from £1.16s. to £16 between 1896 and 1897. By 1900 eleven furnaces produced 9,500 tons of blister copper and the mine had become the largest producer in the British Empire. One million pounds worth of copper had been exported by 1901. In one year the company's revenue exceeded that of the Tasmanian Government. Over 2,600 were on the payroll in 1899. Forty-two companies had been floated to explore the district by October 1898 and "acres of scrub and rock were valued as highly as city blocks". The Coast supported a population of 25,000, one-seventh of the island's total. Zeehan and Queenstown were the third and fourth towns of the colony.¹⁹³

193. Blainey, G., The Peaks of Lyell, op.cit. pp.46, 68, 72, 75, 83, 86, 127, 166, 189.

The vast majority of men on the West Coast were Tasmanians. The mines drained pools of unemployment in the towns and stagnant rural areas. From the early nineties the coast was the mecca for the more adventurous of the colony's workforce who packed the small steamers sailing to Strahan or overlanded from the older settlements. They formed the bulk of the unskilled labour force. Many skilled miners were mainlanders. The mining towns were both more cosmopolitan and more 'Australian' than the rest of the island. Their near-unanimous 'yes' vote for Federation in 1898 and 1899 was one of the highest in Australia. The Sydney Bulletin was influential enough to inspire condemnation from the pulpit of Zeehan's Roman Catholic Church.¹⁹⁴ Ballads and stories in the Bulletin genre frequently appeared in the two local papers. The editor of the Mount Lyell Standard said many men on the fields owned copies of Patterson, Lawson, Boake, Daley and Dawson.¹⁹⁵

Living conditions were primitive in the nineties. In 1901 one-third of dwellings in the Lyell electorate were single-roomed.¹⁹⁶ Averaging around one-hundred inches of rain a year, and exposed to the Westerlies, the coast was cold and wet.

194. Z. & D. H., 19 March 1894.

195. M. L. S., 17 May 1899.

196. Blainey, G., The Peaks of Lyell, op.cit., p.88

In Queenstown smelter fumes, hanging heavily, destroyed vegetation and added to the natural discomforts. Wages were good by Tasmanian standards, but living costs were high. Every article of food and clothing had to be brought in from outside. Each ton of merchandise cost 22s. to transport to Queenstown after being unloaded at Strahan.¹⁹⁷ Men working in the open often lost one-third of their time through bad weather. The ruling wage of 7s. to 7s.6d. a day was estimated as having the same purchasing power as 4s.6d. in Hobart and Launceston.¹⁹⁸ The Eight hour day was practically universal. At Queenstown the working week was seven days long. "No Sunday in Queenstown", wrote the Clipper's West Coast correspondent, "the Sabbath is filled in with 'work of necessity'; presumably by the only local God - the big Company".¹⁹⁹ A preponderance of males was a characteristic of every Western town. In 1901 they outnumbered the females by two to one in Queenstown.²⁰⁰ Lack of family life and primitive living conditions produced a vibrant social life. There was a continuous succession of sporting carnivals, band recitals, and concerts. Hotels were social centres. Queenstown²⁰¹ had fourteen in 1899 and Gormanston, Linda and North Lyell and other ten.

197. Z. & D. H., 16 Jan. 1899.

198. Cl., 26 Feb. 1898.

199. Ibid.

200. S. of T., 1901.

201. Blainey, G., The Peaks of Lyell, op.cit., p.88.

Paynight in Queenstown was bibulous and boisterous. Early in 1899 the Mount Lyell Standard said that although in the past the men "used to take possession of the town and their revels were without bounds", the stranger now would see nothing more exceptional than a "moderately orderly crowd of a thousand men, moderately full of harmless beer and a score or two of immoderate drinkers in all stages between noisy and speechless drunkenness, (and) a few brawls of a not too bloodthirsty nature...".²⁰²

The West Coast towns were pre-eminently working class communities. In their infancy, when living conditions were primitive and large works under construction, the handful of professional and commercial men were swamped among the mass of navvies and smelterhands, tradesmen and miners. Twenty three per cent. of all electors were enfranchised as wage earners and 77 per cent as property owners or lease holders. In the two West Coast electorates wage-earners accounted for 67 per cent of voters and only 33 per cent owned or leased property.²⁰³

In the absence of a large middle class and established social institutions, working class mores flourished. The employer-employee cleavage, blurred in the non-industrialized older settlements, was more apparent on the Coast. The Clipper's

202. 2 Feb. 1899.

203. S. of T., 1900.

Lyell correspondent described how lawyers, doctors and some "twopenny ha'penny employees in the big Co's offices", made up "the snobocracy ..manfully striving to maintain the class distinctions upon which their class has been suck'd" and never communicating with "the ordinary Tom and Bill except for business purposes".²⁰⁴

On 20 April 1889, sixty-nine miners at Zeehan formed a branch of the Amalgamated Miners' Association of Australia.²⁰⁵ By January 1893 membership totalled over 300.²⁰⁶ In the middle of the year Australia's first A. M. A. Hall was opened in the town.²⁰⁷ When, after the 1897 A. M. A. election it was decided to pay the secretary three pounds per week, James Whitelaw became the colony's first professional unionist.²⁰⁸ Unionism spread with mines and miners through the rain-forests and across the rugged mountain ranges. In February 1892 an A. M. A. branch was established at Corinna on the Pieman River, twenty miles north of Zeehan.²⁰⁹ Forty miners at windswept Gormanston formed a branch in September 1896.²¹⁰ Six months later Australia's second

204. 2 April 1898.

205. Z. & D. H., 21 Jan. 1893.

206. Ibid.

207. Ibid, 1 July 1893.

208. Ibid, 18 Jan. 1897.

209. Ibid, 8 Feb. 1892.

210. Ibid, 22 Sept. 1896.

A. M. A. Hall was opened.²¹¹ Early in 1899 membership had mounted to over 300 and a year later to 400.²¹² Emulating the Zeehan union, a full time secretary was appointed in the middle of 1899.²¹³ Ben Tillett, visiting the Coast in March 1898, urged the necessity of unionism on the labourers and smelterhands of Queenstown. Fifty-seven men came forward after the meeting and founded an A. M. A. Branch.²¹⁴ By October 1899 there were 300 unionists in the town.²¹⁵ When in February 1900 the annual conference of the A. M. A. met at Zeehan, there were between 1300 and 1400 members in the colony.²¹⁶

The A. M. A. was not a radical organization. James Whitelaw thought labour and capital should work hand in hand. He believed the workers' main objective was to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay and made it clear that he would side with the management against loafers.²¹⁷ "When the scales were equally balanced", he said, "there was no cause of trouble on either side".²¹⁸ The Association sought to preserve existing

211. M. L. S., 13 March 1897.

212. Z. & D. H., 2 Feb. 1899 and 28 Feb. 1900.

213. M. L. S., 24 July 1899.

214. Cl., 5 March 1898.

215. M. L. S., 20 Oct. 1899.

216. Z. & D. H., 26 Feb. 1900.

217. Ibid, 11 May 1892.

218. M. L. S., 20 Oct. 1899.

wages and conditions by discussion and conciliation rather than strike to better them. During 1892 the mine-owners proposed to lower wages at Zeehan. A strike was called after talks broke down and the owners agreed to Union terms.²¹⁹ In the middle of the following year, falling silver prices led the managers to seek a 10 per cent wage reduction. After a conference the Union agreed to the reduction.²²⁰ During 1894 further wage cuts were proposed. The A. M. A. strongly opposed them and was successful after a series of meetings with the mine managers.²²¹ Unionists were never more than a large minority on the Coast during the nineties and unemployment forced them on the defensive. At the start of each shift the gate of the Queenstown smelters was crowded with unemployed, eager to fill any vacancy. If a man arrived five minutes late he often found his place taken by a 'follower up'.²²² In 1895 A. Montgomery, the government geologist reported that the tribute system was widespread on the Zeehan and Dundas field. Parties of "ppor men without capital" worked the mines on a profit sharing basis, companies becoming "simply middlemen, living on the labour of their tributors."²²³ The only strike among Mount Lyell Company

219. Z. & D. H. May - August 1892.

220. Ibid, 10 July 1893.

221. Ibid, 27 April 1894.

222. Blainey, G., The Peaks of Lyell, op.cit., p. 188.

223. M., 2 Aug. 1895.

employees before 1900 was broken with ease. In the middle of 1896 labourers at the open-cut downed tools for increased pay. The Company booked passages for thirty of Hobart's unemployed and resumed work.²²⁴ Many miners owned mining scrip and speculated with their wages.²²⁵ Ben Tillett suggested that with luck working-men might acquire mines as rich as Lyell.²²⁶ The optimism of the mine-fields dulled the whetted edge of militancy. But most of the small mines had collapsed by the end of the decade.²²⁷ Workers' dreams of sudden wealth evaporated. Realities of a life of wage-earning were no longer shrouded in the mists of illusion.

When founded, West Coast towns were devoid of clubs, lodges, societies, churches, and newspapers. The A. M. A. helped sow this barren social soil and reaped great influence. A correspondent in the Zeehan and Dundas Herald referred to the local A. M. A. branch as the "Zeehan Star Chamber".²²⁸ Its activities pervaded town life. It organized concerts, sports, processions, exhibitions, and bazaars. The Zeehan A. M. A. ball was one of the year's social events. In 1899 two A. M. A. officials were elected to the Zeehan Hospital Board²²⁹ and James Whitelaw

224. Blainey, G., The Peaks of Lyell, op.cit., p. 189.

225. Ibid, 192.

226. M. L. S., 2 March 1898.

227. Blainey, G., The Peaks of , op.cit., p.193.

228. 6 Jan. 1900.

229. Z. & D. H., 3 March 1899.

became a member of the Town Board.²³⁰ The Associations acted as Benevolent Societies. Members of the Queenstown branch received one pound a week sick and accident pay and the same amount during strikes. Relatives received fifty pounds on the death of a member.²³¹ The Association "secured year after year for the members a fair and living wage, and safeguarded their interests in every possible way. In times of sickness... (it)... provided the necessities of life, and in cases of death the bereaved relatives (were) saved the added sorrow of penury".²³²

With its large virile working class population, the West Coast was probably the most vigorous community in the island. The miners themselves were convinced of their greater progressiveness. A speaker at the opening of Gormanston's A. M. A. Hall said that if the rest of the colony was "animated by the same spirit of 'go' as ... the Zeehan, Lyell, Dundas and Reid people, this little island would subtend a much larger angle than she now does in the British dominions".²³³ Ben Tillett, finding his audiences so hearty and responsive, was reminded of Yorkshire socialist meetings.²³⁴ Many employers, used to a traditionally docile labour force, despaired at the egalitarianism

230. Ibid, 16 Feb. 1899.

231. Blainey, G., The Peaks of Lyell, op.cit., p. 190.

232. Z. & D. H., 15 Aug. 1897.

233. M. L. S., 13 March 1897.

234. Article in the Clarion, reprinted in Cl., 9 March 1898.

and independence of Coastal workers. One spoke bitterly of his experiences, stated that a bigger nest of agitators could not be found in the Empire, and yearned for indentured foreign labour.²³⁵ But attitudes to the miners were not purely inductive. Mythology spiced the facts. It was generally believed that mining communities were always progressive, that there was "something in the occupation of the miner that (kept) him abreast of the times".²³⁶

The impact of the West Coast mining towns on young Tasmanians was symbolized in the careers of Jack Earle, Dave O'Keefe and James Joseph Long. All three were born in the country; Earle at Bridgewater, O'Keefe at Longford, and Long at Hamilton on Forth. All worked on farms till their eighteenth year; each was attracted to the west. Earle eventually became President of the Zeehan A. M. A., was elected labour member for Waratah in 1906 and became the first Labour Premier. O'Keefe arrived at Zeehan in the late eighties and worked on the Zeehan and Dundas Herald. He was elected to the Senate in the first Federal elections. Long worked in the mines at Queenstown and organized for the A. M. A. In 1903 he became one of the first three labour men in Tasmanian Parliament. He was Minister of Lands and Works in Earle's first short-lived Ministry and later entered into a long and stormy Senate career.

235. M. L. S., 13 March 1897.

236. M. L. S., 13 March 1897.

Several factors militated against a rapid development of political consciousness. A. M. A. rules which precluded political activity, summarized the outlook of many miners. In 1902 some branches refused to contribute to Whitelaw's election expenses.²³⁷ The Coast was isolated, its attitude often parochial. Until the twentieth century it had only two Assembly seats and in 1903 after electoral redistribution four out of thirty-five. A letter in the Zeehan and Dundas Herald claimed the miner was the "best elector under the sun",²³⁸ but many did not bother to register. Only one-third of Zeehan's eligible voters were on the roll in 1899.²³⁹ The Hobart and Launceston labour weeklies despaired. Deriding the miners' apparent apathy, the Clipper asked, "Is the broadminded and politically educated miner a chimera in Tasmania?"²⁴⁰

Public interest centred on local issues in the early nineties. Numerous meetings discussed the need for post offices, gas works, libraries, hospitals, sixpenny telegrams, and the abolition of Strahan landing charges and beef and kerosene duties. In 1895 a West Coast Tramway League was formed. Two years later

237. McRae, H.D. 'Some Aspects of the Origins of the Tasmanian Labour Party', T.H.R.A. Papers and Proceedings, III, 2 April 1954 p.26.

238. 16 July 1897.

239. Z. & D. H., 1 April 1899.

240. 14 Sept. 1896.

a facts and figures deputation sailed to Hobart to demand the construction of a breakwater at Strahan. A Political Association was formed at Zeehan in the middle 1891, but it folded after a few months.²⁴¹ Another Association was founded on the eve of the 1894 Cumberland election. A vote of members chose liberal Zeehan lawyer D. C. Urquart to oppose the conservative N. J. Brown. Whitelaw said that he was originally against opposing Brown, but had bowed to the decision of the Political Association. An A. M. A. Committee aided Urquart's campaign.²⁴² Urquart was elected, but unseated for bribery when one of his canvassers was found guilty of spending £1.16s.6d. on 'shouting'.²⁴³ The following Saturday night Brown was burnt in effigy in the main street of Zeehan to the accompaniment of exploding crackers and the town band's rendition of 'John Brown's Body'.²⁴⁴ 'Blue Gum' was inspired to compose a quatrain, which ran -

Not a cheer was heard for the great N. J.
 Nor a single joy bell clanging
 As we bore his effigy on the way
 And came to the place of hanging. 245

241. Z. & D. H., 19 June 1891.

242. Ibid, 26 Feb. 1894.

243. Ibid, 15 Feb. 1894.

244. Ibid, 19 Feb. 1894.

245. Ibid, 20 Feb. 1894.

Urquart was elected later in the year when the electorate of Montagu was created. He continued to represent the mines till 1903. The first member for Lyell was the Strahan storekeeper and contractor J. J. Gaffney. But the reign of the middle-class politician was a brief one on the West Coast.

Interest slackened after the 1894 election and the Political Association lapsed. But from 1897 political ideas began to circulate with greater rapidity and the outlook broadened. The West Coast Democratic League was formed at the end of that year. Sharing the same executive, it was an offshoot of the A. M. A. One hundred members discussed a platform and "much stress was laid on female suffrage".²⁴⁶ an act of chivalry in a predominantly male community. The League heard papers on Malthusian Law and the living wage. In 1899 Max Hirsch, the Single Tax propagandist, was invited to the Coast and lectured in Zeehan, Queenstown and Gormanston.²⁴⁷ The Zeehan A. M. A. debated 'Poverty and the Land Question',²⁴⁸ petitioned Parliament for the establishment of conciliation and arbitration courts,²⁴⁹

246. Ibid, 15 Novr. 1897.

247. Ibid, 18 Jan. 1899.

248. Cl., 16 April 1898.

249. Z. & D. H., 6 June 1899.

and collected funds for the Hobart Democratic League.²⁵⁰

The miners reacted violently to the threat of Chinese immigration. Several 'celestials' appeared on the Coast in 1896. Meetings were held, letters and editorials written, and the Chinese left.²⁵¹ Two years later rumours circulated that Chinese labour was to be used at Zeehan.²⁵² A joint meeting of the A. M. A. and the Democratic League initiated a campaign against the 'Yellow Agony'.²⁵³ Three days later a crowded public meeting was told of the influence of Chinese on Victorian and North-East Tasmanian fields, where the pig tail "had left its mark in ruin and social horrors".²⁵⁴ Queenstown was the scene of an anti-Chinese demonstration in the middle of July. A resolution demanding exclusion was sent to Parliament. A pledge was made to boycott socially anyone encouraging Chinese in any way on the West Coast. One speaker asked whether lives were sacrificed at Eureka that Chinamen be the gainers. They had, he said, "no part in the aspirations of the martyrs of 1854".²⁵⁵ In September

250. Ibid, 3 Feb. 1899.

251. Ibid, 28 June 1896.

252. M. L. S., 6 July 1898.

253. Z. & D. H., 1 July 1898.

254. Ibid, 4 July 1898.

255. M. L. S., 16 July 1898.

1899 a Chinaman opened a business at Rosebery. A vigilance committee was formed and he was forced to move on.²⁵⁶ The appearance of a handful of itinerant Asians raised the first flicker of militancy in Tasmania's so-called 'Gibraltar of Democracy'.

One winter's morning in 1899 a tall, golden-bearded stranger stepped from the train at the Queenstown station. Wearing frock coat, three-decker tie with an opal and diamond pin, tan boots and ten-gallon hat, he walked through a curious crowd into the sunlit street. He roamed the town for several days, admiring babies, talking with their mothers and greeting all with a 'Good-day, brother'. An advertisement appeared in the Mount Lyell Standard -

Come and hear King O'Malley
Your future member of the
Commonwealth Parliament
Come Along, Brothers! 257

O'Malley had arrived in the electorate he was to represent in Federal Parliament for seventeen years. As a prelude to his Federal election campaign he stood for a bye-election for the Tasmanian Assembly but was defeated. In the columns of the West Coast papers he wrote - "Gentlemen - Having enrolled 1200 electors, I shall continue to organize the inalienable rights

256. Cl., 30 Sept. 1899.

257. Catts, D., King O'Malley, (Sydney 1938), p.80.

of humanity in Gormanston, North Lyell, Darwin, Kelly Basin, Strahan, Zeehan and Waratah, until all democrats, as well as aristocrats, autocrats, plutocrats and theocrats are on the Federal roll".²⁵⁸

O'Malley launched the most spectacular electoral campaign the colony had ever seen. He enrolled electors in every corner of the Coast, walking frock-coated and ten-gallon-hatted over rugged mountains and through dripping forests. He travelled the mountain railway tied to the top of a load of logs and descended the mines to enroll miners at work. Rain or shine he stood on the street waiting for the smelter-hands returning from their shift, saying as they passed, "Are you on the roll brother? If not, get on it. You'll need me".²⁵⁹ He spoke on street corners and from hotel balconies, packed the halls of Queenstown and Zeehan and held audiences of up to a thousand spellbound for two-and-one-half hours. The flamboyant flow of wit, buffoonery and sound reason was irresistible to an amusement-starved population. He had come, he told the miners "as a modern crusader - truly a Peter the Hermit - to preach the gospel of democracy, to raise the workers to their proper station to enable them to realize their strength and power...".²⁶⁰

258. Cl., 9 July 1899.

259. Catts, D., *op.cit.*, pp.77-80.

260. Cl., 3 Novr. 1899.

James Whitelaw ran with O'Malley for the Representatives and Dave O'Keefe stood for the Senate. The miners' vote became a factor in Tasmanian politics with dramatic suddenness. O'Malley was second to Braddon and O'Keefe gained the third Senate seat. O'Malley received 1906 of 2484 votes cast at Queenstown, more than half his total from the whole island. Whitelaw received only 56 of his 1092 primaries from 23 rural areas, O'Keefe polled 60 votes in the same districts. "One thing is abundantly clear", said James Paton, "the West Coast is a mighty power in our politics, and the West Coast goes solid for democracy". The election was a moment of "gorgeous ecstasy and solemn thankful joy". His jubilant editorial declared.

Democracy has at last triumphed in Tasmania, triumphed as it never triumphed previously... The people have made a great leap forward, and commenced to come into their own. We are living in the purple of the dawn, and somewhere ahead is the glory of the full day.²⁶¹

260. Cl., 3 Novr. 1899.

261. 10 Aug. 1900.

THE NEW TASMANIA.

By 1901 Tasmania had fully recovered from the depression of the early nineties. Revenue for the previous year was the highest ever received in the history of the Colony, having almost doubled since 1881. The total value of trade increased from £3,500,000 to £4,700,000 during the nineties. Imports were steady but exports leapt by over 80 per cent, from £1,400,000 to £2,610,000 or from £9 to £15 per head of population. Wages had reached their pre-depression level in most trades by 1900, while food prices had fallen slightly. Between 1891 and 1900 the number of savings bank accounts jumped by about 60 per cent, from 27,000 to 42,000. Deposits rose in value from £550,000 to just over £1,000,000. Mining was the secret of the rapid convalescence. It moderated the virulence of the slump, and by absorbing many of the unemployed prevented any serious drain of population. Minerals accounted for over 60 per cent of the island's export income in 1901. Between 1894 and 1901 copper exports rose in value from £110,000 to just over £1,000,000. Silver exports quadrupled, gold doubled but tin declined slightly. The area under cultivation increased by just over 10 per cent during the nineties. The grain industry, after stagnating since the sixties, began to

expand. Wheat production was stationary, but output of oats and barley doubled and the total area under crop increased from 168,000 to 232,000 acres. Potato production rose by a third and orcharding made rapid strides. Export of fruit increased from 365,000 to 6,690,000 bushels during the decade. Jam produced in southern factories mounted from 1,000,000 to 6,000,000 lbs. between 1891 and 1904. The pastoral industry did not share in these developments. Flocks increased slightly but wool exports declined, amounting to only 10 per cent of export income in 1900, compared with 28 per cent in 1890 and 48 per cent in 1867. The whole economy had been transformed. The Tasmanian population had reached 172,500 by 1901, although the rate of increase had slowed since the eighties. The West Coast increased from 4,000 to 17,000 during the decade. The North-West Coast continued to expand but the rate faltered for the first time since the fifties. The North East developed considerably due to mining and construction of the Fingal and Scottsdale lines. The Midlands and South-East remained stagnant and the electorates of Brighton, Sorell, Richmond and Glamorgan lost population. The two cities suffered from depression. Launceston gained a few hundred but Hobart declined slightly. However urbanization had been rapid since the early eighties. There were 43 towns with over 100 inhabitants in 1881, 77 in 1891 and 87 at century end. Change had come swiftly after the

mid-century depression and on the eve of Federation the colony could look back on an era of considerable material achievement.¹

1. S. of T. 1881 to 1910
Blainey G. "Population Movements in Tasmania 1870-1901";
op.cit.

STATEHOOD.

The dawn of January 1 was clear and fragrant. A few hours before an era in Tasmanian history had closed forever: the island colony had become a member state of the Australian Commonwealth. Federation wrought many changes in Tasmanian life. The opening of mainland markets boosted export trade and agriculture received a sorely needed fillip. Manhood suffrage was forced on the Tasmanian Parliament and contact with the more progressive political life of mainland colonies vivified the democratic movement in the island. Developments in federal politics encouraged the emergence of the party system. The outlook of the labour party was transformed while local liberals met the fate suffered by Deakin's party in the federal sphere. Parochialism, apparent throughout the nineteenth century, was slowly submerged and the outlook of the whole community broadened to comprehend the new vistas of nationalism. Discussing the impact of federation, Herbert Nicholls wrote, in 1913, that:

The realization of their oneness with their bretheren all over the continent across Bass Strait has given Tasmanians an outlook so broad and tolerant as to frequently cause astonishment amongst new arrivals. The phrase 'othersiders' has disappeared. The past is no longer lamented; the man in the streets of Hobart (once called Sleepy Hollow) now talks of the future, and points proudly to the hundreds of new houses which are being erected in every direction. Country districts, where formerly shabby men drove shaky chaise carts, now hum with the motor cars of the

farmers and orchardists, and a general feeling of optimism prevails.²

Pealing bells and exploding crackers heralded Federation in Hobart. But the most spectacular display of fireworks was provided by a visiting German gunboat and the decorations in town and suburb were sparse. Celebrations were staged in Launceston and Queenstown yet elsewhere the day sped unsung. Following the Boer War festivities of the preceding months, Federation proved an anti-climax and generated little enthusiasm. The Mercury believed that many people, though enthusiastic at heart, found it difficult to decide how to decorate suitably. "The occasion was not 'patriotic' in the recent sense, and it did not seem that the Union Jack could be aptly used again as the keynote of effect. Nor could the patriotic mottoes be set out again appropriately". Launceston utilized illuminations which had greeted returning Boer War veterans, though a few had been "appropriately altered". Tasmania's entry into federation was half hearted. Yet the irrevocable step was taken and the gates of change swung wide. Dynamic and liberal forces had triumphed over inertia springing from particularism on one hand, loyalty to Britain on the other.³

2. Nicholls, H. "The Struggle in Tasmania" in Wise B.R., The Making of the Australian Commonwealth, (Lond.1913), p.358.

3. M. & L. E., 1 and 2 Jan. 1901.
M. L. S., 3 Jan. 1901.

Tasmanian settlers were like most colonists in having found their loyalties divided between old and new homelands. But emotional ties with the mother country rarely received such tender care as that lavished on them in the island. Novelist Anthony Trollope found Tasmanians of the seventies almost "English made in their loyalty".⁴ Many despaired when the last English troops left the island in 1870. The Tasmanian Times drew a parallel with the withdrawal of the Roman legions from colonial Britain.⁵ Manners and fashions of the old world were studiously aped, customs and ideas frequently overvalued. The Mercury described how in the professions the last man out was "deemed the best", but wondered if every new-comer had to "give the fashion to society, be the head of every club, the object of worship of Colonial dandies" and be on "all public boards...and obtain place over those whose lives (had) been spent in the island".⁶

Some settlers attempted to recreate the English environment and planted English trees, grasses and flowers; bordered neat fields with hederows; stocked lakes and rivers

4. Trollope, A; Australia and New Zealand. (Lond. 1875), II, p.155.

5. Robson, L.L., *op.cit.*, p.285.

6. 11 Novr. 1882.

with trout; rode red-coated to the hunt and surrounded their lives with the atmosphere of the old world. Almost all nineteenth century visitors attested to the success of their endeavours. In the late thirties the Pole Strzlecki thought that no country reminded him so much of the old one as did Van Diemen's Land.⁷ Irish exile John Mitchel found, in the early fifties, that every sight and sound along the main road reminded him that he was in a "small, misshapen, transported, bastard England...".⁸ Trollope thought everything in the colony more English "than is England herself".⁹ In the eighties a mainland tourist remarked that "no place out of England seems quite so English, no colonists are less moulded into new types and expressions by the exigencies and conditions of the new country. Even the humble people you meet seem to have stepped out of English homes".¹⁰

A distinctive Australian outlook had not developed by Federation despite the fact that Tasmania had a higher proportion of native born than any other colony.¹¹

7. See Fitzpatrick, K., Sir John Franklin in Tasmania 1837-43, (Melb. 1949), p/49.

8. Mitchel, J., Jail Journal, (Dublin 19?), p.263)

9. Trollope, A., *op.cit.*, p.154.

10. M., 26 Feb. 1887.

11. In 1895-6 the Tasmanian percentage was 78.54, the Australian 67.62. See Coghlan. T.A., The Seven Colonies of Australia 1895-6, (Syd.1896), pp.50-1.

Fearing mainland democracy, conservative Tasmanians remained devoted to the Mother Country. The labour party developed late and was not tinged with radical nationalism till the early years of the twentieth century. In 1903 the editor of the Clipper remarked that "Tasmania is very English. Which means that in labour politics it has been very slow".¹²

Irish influence was negligible in the colony. In the nineties only 3.88 per cent of Tasmanians were Irish born. The average for the other colonies was 7.31 per cent.¹³ Geography was a potent influence. The mild island climate demanded a minimum of adaptation, while the shallow waters of Bass Strait created among Tasmanians a sense of isolation and separateness not shared by their continental neighbours. Until the twentieth century the men of the island colony "looked upon themselves as almost alien to the 'other siders' as they called all Australians...".¹⁴

Insecurity was the corollary of separateness and Tasmanians were attracted to almost every scheme which promised an end to their isolation. Plans for federation were approved in the fifties.¹⁵ During the sixties and seventies numerous attempts were made to attract the other colonies into

12. 14 March 1903.

13. Coghlan, T.A., The Seven Colonies of Australasia 1895-6., op.cit., pp.50-1.

14. Nicholls, H., op.cit., p.351.

15. Allen, C.D., The Early Federal Movement in Australia; (Ontario 1907) pp.273-5, 374-81, 403-5.

reciprocal trade treaties.¹⁶ The Wilson Ministry (1869-72) twice tried to bring them together in a Zollverein.¹⁷ Union with Victoria was frequently advocated and found considerable support, particularly in the north of the island. In the sixties Dilke found it "a measure strongly wished for".¹⁸ Two tourists of the following decade claimed that similar opinions were "prevalent in Launceston".¹⁹ In the eighties William Westgarth wrote that the subject was "gravely, and by no means disapprovingly, discussed by many Tasmanians...from Mr. Premier Fysh downwards".²⁰ The Launceston Daily Telegraph strongly supported annexation during the late eighties. In August 1888 a large meeting in Launceston appointed a committee of leading citizens to further the cause.²¹ But more grandiose schemes diverted attention and the issue sank from sight.

Imperial Federation briefly attracted many prominent Tasmanians. League branches were formed in Hobart and Launceston in the first half of 1888. Meetings and debates were held during the year and membership had reached 300 by March 1889.²²

16. See above, Ch. V., pp.129-130.

17. Robson, L.L., op.cit.p265.

18. Dilke, C.W., op.cit., p.360.

19. Hill, R. & R., What we saw in Australia, (Lond.1875); p.411.

20. Westgarth, W., Half a Century of Australian Progress; (Lond.1889) p.31.

21. D.T., 14 and 21 Aug. 1888.

22. First Annual Report of I. F. L., M., 22 March 1889.

A few months later the Canadian propagandist G. R. Parkin lectured in Hobart and Launceston. Pre-eminently a respectable, middle-class organization, the League boasted the allegiance of the Anglican bishop, several judges, leading professional and business men and politicians like Braddon, Brown, Fysh and Agnew.²³ The working class was disinterested.²⁴ The League's first annual report claimed that membership would have been increased if members had "taken certain means to 'conciliate' the working-class population".²⁵ At a League debate in 1889 Hugh Kirk maintained that as Australia "had eclipsed any other nation in the world, so far as the working-classes were concerned", they had nothing to gain and a good deal to lose by Imperial Federation. James Hall said succinctly that Imperial Federation meant Empire, Empire meant Emperor and Emperor meant despotism.²⁶

Though dormant, thought of intercolonial free trade and political union, remained alive in the colony during the seventies and eighties. Interest roused in the second half of the eighties by Federal Council meetings, quickened after the 1890 Premier's Conference and proposals for the convention of the following year were "accepted practically

23. M., 10 March 1888.

24. Report of T. & L. C., meeting, T.N., 7 Apl. 1888.

25. M., 22 March 1889.

26. Ibid, 21 May 1889.

without dissent."²⁷ The Bill providing for submission of the Draft Constitution to the people passed the Assembly without division but lapsed in the Council after failure of the cause in New South Wales. The Premiers' Conference held in Hobart in 1895 "created great interest". The Hobart Chamber of Commerce and Huon fruitgrowers advocated inter-colonial free trade. The Victorian-based Australian Natives Association sent delegates to Hobart to rejuvenate the moribund Tasmanian organization. The Hobart group was active during the next two years and kept the cause of union alive.²⁸

The approach of the 1898 Referendum pushed federation to the forefront of the public stage. Government statistician R. M. Johnston predicted that the financial arrangements would bankrupt the island. His views, supported by Bird and Clark, caused great "searchings of heart".²⁹ Clark said he would not vote no, but refused to recommend the Bill. A Committee of prominent businessmen was appointed by a public meeting to scrutinize the financial aspects of federation. Reporting against immediate union they formed the Federation with Safety and Advantage Association. Leadership came from politicians like Bird, Miles, Woolnough and William Brown and businessmen

27. Nicholls, M., op.cit., p.351.

28. M., 26 and 27 Jan. 1895.

29. Diary of J. B. Walker, 2 June 1898.

like G. P. Fitzgerald, William Crosby and William Perkins. The Association waged a vigorous campaign. Regular meetings were held in Hobart and speakers toured the island.

Advocates of union formed Federal Leagues in Hobart and Launceston early in May.³⁰ Members were mostly young professional and commercial men. The leaders of the Hobart group were F. W. Piesse, Archdeacon Whittington, the radical lawyer Herbert Nicholls and liberal politicians Bradley and Mulcahey. Leading spirits in the Launceston organization were lawyers M. J. Clarke and J. H. Keating and John Gunning the editor of the Daily Telegraph. Prominent politicians Braddon, Fysh, Lewis and Dobson "offered themselves as privates in the little Federal army".³¹ The League worked with a zeal unmatched since the anti-transportation crusade. Its organization foreshadowed the political parties of the twentieth century. Huge meetings were organized in Hobart and Launceston; speakers addressed gatherings in town and hamlet throughout the colony. Local committies sprang up in many centres. A copy of the League paper The Federalist was posted to every elector in the island.³² A medal was struck bearing the insignia "Australian Commonwealth 3/6/98"³³

30. M., 4 May 1898.

31. Nicholls, op.cit., p.355.

32. M., 11 May 1898.

33. Ibid, 31 May 1898.

The League banner bore a shield, the Union Jack and the Australian flag and was crossed with the motto "Tasmania expects everyman to do his duty".³⁴ English immigrant W. H. Dawson composed a song called "Sons of Australia". The enthusiasm with which it was sung at League meetings, wrote Herbert Nicholls, would "dwell forever in the memory of those who took part in those gatherings".³⁵

Fourteen and a half thousand Tasmanians, or roughly 46 per cent of all voters, went to the polls on June 3, 1898. 81 per cent favoured federation.³⁶ Motives were manifold. Fear, hope, faith and pessimism mingled with patriotic idealism, regional jealousies and the desire for material gain. The majority expected to benefit from intercolonial free trade while others feared for their livelihood. Many conservatives deprecated mainland democracy and regarded manhood suffrage and one man one vote as dangerous innovations. Others, however, saw federation as a safeguard against further working class advances. The wealthy feared that loss of customs revenue would herald heavy income taxes. Many progressive men supported union and applauded the democratic franchise, but the radical wing of the labour movement attacked

34. Ibid, 3 June 1898.

35. Nicholls, H., op.cit., p.353.

36. S. of T., 1898.

the proposed constitution. The need for adequate defense preparations loomed large in some minds even though no immediate danger was apparent. Catholic Bishop Delaney thought defense one of the main purposes of union and his views were frequently echoed in the press.³⁷ The Churches gave strong backing to federation. Both Anglican and Catholic Bishops and the President of the Methodist Conference made favourable public statements.³⁸ The Anglican Ministers' Association decided to recommend the Bill to their congregations and many pro-federalists sermons were delivered the Sunday before polling day.³⁹ In a pastoral issued two days before the Referendum, Bishop Montgomery wrote, "For my part, I long to step on to that loftier plateau, and see those nobler visions. I trust that my fellow Churchmen will see their way clear to accompany me."⁴⁰

Federal League members were flushed with the heady wine of romantic nationalism. But many saw federation in terms of colonial rather than national interests. They were federalists for the sake of Tasmania. Isolation and weakness were the most potent factors producing the affirmative vote. It was widely believed that there was no alternative, that Tasmania could not afford to stay out.⁴¹ On the evening

37. L.E., 29 April and 30 May 1898., M., 29 April 1898; D.T., 2 June 1898, Z. & D.H., 2 June 1898.

38. L.E., 30 May 1898.

39. M., 28 May, 1898; L.E., 30 May 1898; Z. & D.H., 30 May 1898.

40. C.N., 1 June 1898.

41. L.E., 31 May 1898, Z. & D.H., 31 May, 1898.

before the Referendum J. B. Walker wrote in his diary that:

After getting over the first shock of Johnston's figures and realizing that Federation was in many respects a leap in the dark, thoughtful men looked at the other alternative - what would be Tasmania's position if she was left alone outside the Federation with United Australia bonded against her. Slowly many of us came to the conclusion that this was a worse alternative than the possible financial risk of joining. 42

The various economic, social and political pressures emerge more clearly in a regional analysis of voting. The north of the island gave overwhelming support for union; in the South there was a bare majority. In the seventeen electorates north of Oatlands 6.3. per cent of voters opposed federation while 37.1 per cent voted no in the twelve southern districts. In the four North Western electorates of Devonport, West Devon, Latrobe and Wellington 96.6 per cent of voters gave an affirmative vote.⁴³ Intercolonial free trade was a powerful incentive to a community of market starved farmers. Mainland cities promised to absorb increasing quantities of the coast's potatoes, oats, vegetables, barley and dairy produce. The farmers had strongly supported the projected reciprocal trade treaty with Victoria in 1885.⁴⁴ Both coastal papers, the Emu Bay Times and the North West Post urged the cause of union and local Federal League branches were active. Progressive

42. Diary of J. B. Walker, 2 June 1898.

43. Calculated from S. of T., 1898.

44. John Henry to James Smith, 27 March 1885; see also Chapt. V.

in outlook, these districts lacked that element of entrenched conservatism which balked at the democratic provisions of the draft constitution.⁴⁵

The mining districts went solidly for union. Only 4 per cent of voters registered no votes in the two West Coast electorates of Montagu and Waratah. The economic motive was strong. Every article of food and clothing had to be brought in from outside. Intercolonial free trade promised to lower the cost of living of every man, woman and child on the mine fields.⁴⁶ The Zeehan and Dundas Herald remarked that workers, whose children were going without "fresh meat and butter, and eggs and bacon, owing to prohibitive prices", needed little added incentive to approve federation.⁴⁷ The Coast was isolated. Throughout the nineties the miners complained of official neglect, of inadequate representation, and compared their plight with the uitlanders on the South African gold fields. In travelling time Melbourne was as close as Hobart and many consumer goods and much of the capital came from Victoria. The Zeehan and Dundas Herald promised that

45. See above, Ch. II, pp. 41-3

46. See above, Ch. VI, p. 244.

47. 1 June 1898.

federation would stimulate the mining industry and increase the flow of capital.⁴⁸ The democratic franchise was attractive to the miners, many of whom were deprived of the vote in local elections. Coastal towns were more cosmopolitan than other parts of the island and had a higher percentage of mainlanders.⁴⁹ Anti-Chinese feeling was strong and many saw federation as a means to ensure a White Australia. Whitelaw, the Zeehan A. M. A. Secretary, urged the cause of union "to prevent the undesirable shipment of these most objectionable people in our midst".⁵⁰ Other mining centres were strongly pro-federal. George Town's 98.33 per cent affirmative vote was the highest in the colony. Only 8 of 404 voters opposed union in the gold mining centres of Beaconsfield and Lefroy. Fingal and Ringarooma, the mixed mining and farming electorates of the north-east, registered a 10 per cent negative vote.

Only 6.54 per cent of Launceston's 1759 voters opposed federation. Since the settlement of the Port Phillip district in the 1830's Launceston had been closely connected with Melbourne. Federal feeling was evident from the days of the

48. 2 June 1898.

49. See above, Ch. VI, p.243.

50. Z. & D. H., 6 June 1898.

anti-transportation crusade.⁵¹ The movement for annexation to Victoria found its strongest support in the northern town. Long standing jealousy of Hobart added impetus to the federal cause. Essentially a commercial and financial centre Launceston expected to benefit from the opening of markets across the Strait. The three papers, the Launceston Examiner, the Daily Telegraph and the Tasmanian Democrat, all gave vigorous support to federation and the Northern Federal League was active for several months before the Referendum. The northern agricultural districts of Cressy, Deloraine, Evandale, Selby, Westbury and Campbell Town followed the lead of Launceston and recorded a 90 per cent affirmative vote. Freetrade promised expanding markets for primary produce. Possible danger to the meat and grain producers was scornfully dismissed by the Northern press.

In Hobart and suburbs 39.6 per cent of voters were against union. The three papers united in opposition to the draft constitution. The Mercury thought it contained "gross, open, palpable absurdities" and objected to the democratic franchise.⁵² The Tasmanian News predicted insolvency⁵³ while

51. Reynolds, J., Edmund Barton, (Sydney 1948) pp.146-7

52. 7 June 1898.

53. 2 June 1898.

the Clipper detected an insidious capitalist conspiracy.⁵⁴ Many were swayed by the campaign of the Federation with Safety and Advantage Association. Motives of Association members were various. Free trade threatened a number of local enterprises like tanning; furniture, soap, candle and biscuit making and the clothing and boot industries.⁵⁵ G. P. Fitzgerald's opposition, said the Clipper, sprang from fear of mainland retail firms.⁵⁶ J. B. Walker thought the Association represented "chiefly those opposed to change". Perkins, he said, was the sort of man "who would vote against the Millenium if he thought it would involve him in a payment of 20s. per annum more taxes".⁵⁷ The gloomy prophesies of such influential men as Johnston, Bird and Clark were powerful deterrents. Johnston's figures initially stunned even the most ardent federalists.⁵⁸ J. B. Walker claimed that Clark's yes-no attitude would lose 1000 votes for the federal cause.⁵⁹ Traditions of independence were strongest in the south and inhibited growth of national sentiment.

54. 4 June 1898.

55. See letters from A.J. Taylor and R. Miller & Co.,; M., 30 and 31 May 1898.

56. 4 June 1898}

57. Diary of J. B. Walker, 2 June 1898.

58. Nicholls, H.; op.cit; p.353.

59. Diary of J. B. Walker; 2 June 1898.

In the six electorates of the midlands and south east 52.6 per cent of voters opposed federation. Inter-colonial free trade offered little to the woolgrowers while mainland producers threatened to capture the local wheat and meat markets. These districts opposed the Reciprocity Treaty of 1885, were the centre of the protectionist cause in the late eighties and fought strenuously for retention of the tax on imported meat.⁶⁰ A letter from 'Midlander' in the Mercury on the morning of the Referendum, claimed that federation would "kill the meat and wheat grower in Tasmania, and give a monopoly of supply to Victoria and New South Wales".⁶¹ Such fears were carefully cultivated by the southern press and speakers of the Federation with Safety and Advantage Association. Backward and conservative in outlook, these districts were apprehensive of manhood suffrage, abolition of plural voting and increased direct taxation. But such forebodings were of little concern to the small settlers of Franklin, Kingborough and New Norfolk who gave an 88 per cent affirmative vote. Free trade promised expanding markets for the apples, berry fruit and timber of the Huon and Channel districts and the hops of the Derwent Valley.

60. See above, Ch. V.

61. 3 June 1898.

The result of the 1899 Referendum was a foregone conclusion. The Federal Leagues were again active. Discussion during the months preceding polling day had but "increased the ardour for union",⁶² and southern papers moderated their criticism. The yes vote increased by 2,700 over the 1898 figure to 13,437, the no vote fell by 1900 to a mere 791. Brighton, Glamorgan, Oatlands, Richmond, Hobart and Queenborough were the only districts which returned an over 10 per cent negative vote.⁶³ After years of opposition the Mercury graciously admitted that need for union made "all else look mean and trivial in the extreme".⁶⁴

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62. M., 28 July 1899.

63. S. of T., 1899.

64. M., 28 July 1899.

INTO THE FUTURE.

In the first decade of the twentieth century the labour movement grew to maturity and political life hardened in the mould of the modern party system. The independent politician all but disappeared. Only one non-party candidate contested the 1912 elections. Federation forced changes and the rise of labour hastened polarization, but the process had been apparent since the eighties. The Federal League foreshadowed later developments and conservatives attempted party organization before the first working men entered State Parliament.

A Reform League was established during the first half of 1902. A conference held at Launceston early in July was attended by delegates from Hobart, Launceston and twenty-four country centres. Ten representatives from Hobart and Launceston and ten from rural districts were appointed to a central executive. The League advocated retrenchment, reduction of the two State Houses and abolition of the income tax. Members came largely from middle-class groups. The Launceston Conference was attended by pastorlists, farmers, storekeepers, merchants and professional men.⁶⁵

65. D. T., 2 and 3 July 1902.

League branches were active before the 1903 election. In Hobart a manifesto was issued several months before polling day and public meetings were held.⁶⁶ In the north the executive considered branch recommendations and chose candidates for eight electorates.⁶⁷ At Latrobe a ballot of members was taken to decide the League candidate.⁶⁸ Four nominees gained election but failed to co-operate in Parliament and the organization soon collapsed. The following year National Associations were founded in Hobart and Launceston "to oppose class legislation both in Federal and State Parliaments". Hobart chairman was the erstwhile radical G. P. Fitzgerald.⁶⁹ The association was active in the electoral campaigns of 1906 and 1909 and district committees were set up in some electorates. Labour successes during 1909-10 forced conservatives into closer organization and the National Associations merged in the Tasmanian Liberal League, the prototype of future non-labour parties.

The rise of labour was the most significant feature of political life in the first decade of the century. Union organization lagged behind political developments and the

66. T. N., 26 Jan. and 7 Feb. 1903.

67. D. T., 28 March 1903.

68. N. W. A., 13 and 27 March 1903.

69. Walch's Tasmanian Almanach, 1905.

Hobart Trades and Labour Council was not re-established till 1909. But in the previous year a branch of the Australian Workers' Union was formed and organizers began to disturb the placid surface of Tasmanian rural life. The West Coast played a highly important role in labour achievements of this period. It was a secure base for the infant party, providing votes, money and confidence while it forayed in the more conservative parts of the island.

Closer organization was attempted a few weeks after the first federal elections. Representatives from Zeehan, Queenstown, Hobart, Beaconsfield and Gormanston met at Zeehan early in September, drafted a detailed platform and founded the Tasmanian Workers Political League.⁷⁰ At the 1903 elections the West Coast returned the first three working men to sit in the House of Assembly. Jack Earle, the future labour Premier, was narrowly defeated at Waratah. When the results were posted jubilant miners "virtually foresook their homes" and Linda schoolchildren enjoyed a half holiday.⁷¹

Early in June a Labour Conference in Hobart, attended by union and Political League delegates and the labour M. H. A.'s, formed the Workers Political League. J.A.Jensen, recently elected member for George Town, attended and signed

70. Cl., 5 Oct. 1901

71. Z. & D.H., 3 April 1903.

the party pledge. The Conference, said the Clipper, would be a circumstance for Tasmanian workers" to date events from for it represents the most important movement that has ever been made in political labour organization in the State".⁷² Labour won seven seats at the 1906 elections; four on the West Coast and one each at Beaconsfield, Hobart and Launceston. Three years later labour representation rose to twelve. On October 20, 1909 a labour ministry led by Jack Earle took office. The government fell seven days later but the labour movement had come of age.

Middle-class radicalism was annihilated as an independent political force between 1900 and 1909. The Propsting Ministry (1903-4), which included Herbert Nicholls as Attorney General, adopted a radical programme of old age pensions, municipal reform, minimum wages, abolition of the Legislative Council and compulsory purchase of estates suitable for closer settlement. But the government fell before it could force any legislation through the Upper House. An attempt to organize a liberal party after the 1906 elections was unsuccessful.⁷³ But in May 1908 the liberal Daily Post

72. Cl., 6 June 1903.

73. T.N., 12 April 1906.

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72. Cl., 6 June 1903.

73. T.N., 12 April 1906.

was established in Hobart and prior to the elections of the following year a Liberal Democratic Party was formed. Eight candidates contested the election on a platform of radical land legislation and reform of the Legislative Council. Opening the campaign the Daily Post said:

For the first time in the history of Tasmanian politics the liberals are taking organized part in an electoral campaign. There have been stalwart liberals, giants in their day, like the late Mr. Justice Clark and Mr. Justice Nicholls, who fought strenuously but they were in advance of their time and all the support they received was that which they commanded by their personal influence...Conditions have largely changed of late, however, and with organization the liberals are becoming a factor in politics here that they were not before.

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Conditions had largely changed, but the new political atmosphere was fatal for the liberal cause.

Though a three cornered one, the election narrowed down to a pitched battle between the labour and conservative camps. The liberals, stranded in a political no-mans-land, and exposed to withering fire from both sides, were routed. Discussing the contest, L. F. Giblin, the economist son of the former Premier, observed that "a strong feeling existed in the State in favour of parties holding more extreme views

than those of the Liberal Democrats". "The electors", he concluded, had "done their best to drive men of liberal democratic views into extreme camps".⁷⁵

The rise and achievements of Tasmanian liberalism were epitomized in the careers of three men: W. R. Giblin, A. I. Clark and Herbert Nicholls. Giblin represented the liberalism which grew with the prosperity of the late seventies and early eighties. His coalition government ushered in a period of stable government and progressive reform. He imposed the first tax on property and attempted to remove duties from consumer goods. His Constitution Bill of 1884 was the first significant reduction of the franchise since 1856. The Masters and Servants Act was stripped of its severity and the first legislation dealing with employment of women and children was enacted. But Giblin feared mass democracy and leadership of the popular cause passed to more radical men.

Clark was the foremost of the group of ardent young men who during the 1870's nurtured the tender shoots of liberal thought and in the following decade established the Reform Association to plant their dreams in the soils

75. D.P., 8 May 1909

of political reality. He was the first politician to co-operate with the union movement and as Attorney General in the Fysh and Braddon Ministries directed the most abundant harvest of reform in the history of the colony. But like many public men of his generation he was spurned and distrusted by the working-class movement that emerged from the troubles of the nineties. As middle-age crept on, pessimism doused the fires of reform. Though bearing the standard of federation from the early seventies, he refused to recommend the Draft Constitution. The man, who once had looked to democracy to rejuvenate mankind, confessed to his colleagues in 1891, that:

He along with many of his friends, were democrats, not because they cherished the dreams of their youth that any particular government had power to create an ideal happiness, but...they were democrats through despair. Autocracy and plutocracy had been tried and they had failed, and they were going to try democracy, because at least they knew it would not put obstacles in the way of people that these other forms did...⁷⁶

Herbert Nicholls represented the new strain of liberalism that grew during the nineties. A protege of Clark's, he served his articles in the old reformer's office and inherited the leadership of the federal cause in the south. He was the driving force behind the Federal

76. M., 15 Aug. 1891.

League and organized the campaigns of 1898 and 1899. Entering the Assembly in 1899, he added his voice to the growing demand for social reform. While Attorney General in the radical Propsting Ministry he tried to introduce reforms which he hoped would "lead Tasmania into the current of social and political progress that was setting in in the other states".⁷⁷ He led liberalism far to the left and was "as near to being a labour member as one can go without signing the pledge".⁷⁸

Clark's liberalism contained seeds of both future conservatism and future socialism. This dualism, though not apparent before 1900, shattered the liberal movement in the first decade of the new century. This fate was symbolized in the careers of G. P. Fitzgerald and L. F. Giblin. Fitzgerald, one of the "ferocious reformers" elected in 1887, worked closely with the labour movement, was influenced by Henry George and spearheaded many radical attacks in the Assembly during the late eighties. Shocked by the strikes, and rejected at the 1891 election, he drifted into conservative ranks and by 1904 had become

77. M., 11 March 1903.

78. Ibid, 30 March 1906.

chairman of the National Association. Giblin was the master-mind behind the ill fated Liberal Democratic Party. A few months after the election debacle he signed the labour pledge. Rising immediately to prominence in the party, he organized lectures, was elected to the state executive and attended both State and Federal Conferences. Returned to the Assembly for Denison he became the financial adviser of the second Earle Ministry which came to office in 1914.

The importance of the liberal movement in Tasmanian history has been underestimated. Activity of mainland radicals was more spectacular and later labour achievements obscured the work of nineteenth century middle-class reformers. But for more than a generation liberalism inspired those who patiently dismantled the conservative, stratified society inherited from the early years of settlement and laid the foundations for the social developments of the twentieth century. Liberalism, indeed, was the midwife of modern Tasmania.

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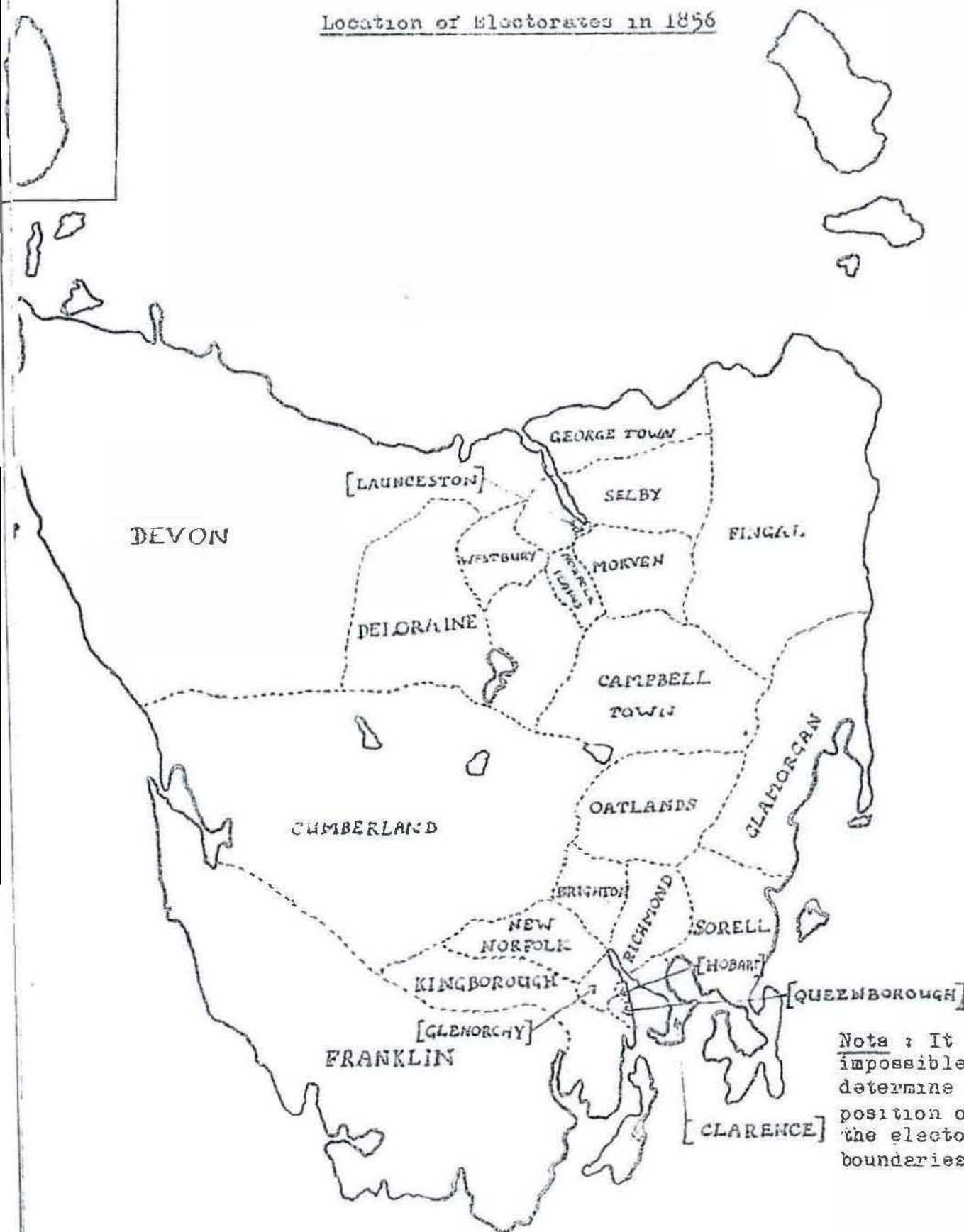
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TASMANIA

Location of Electorates in 1856



Note : It has been impossible to determine the exact position of some of the electoral boundaries.

